SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE

PIRZADA
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VENGEANCE UNCHAINED

GHOST RIDERS UNITE

FOR A NEW ERA OF VENGEANCE!

JOHNNY BLAZE! DANNY KETCH! ROBBIE REYES! THE HOOD! KUSHALA! Many have borne the title Spirit of Vengeance. Now, as its most recent claimant has embarked on their final ride to explosive results, others still stir in the darker corners of the Marvel Universe! One, in particular, has a stronger connection to two Ghost Riders than the rest – and after years, Vengeance is ready to show its fangs again at last! Meanwhile, Johnny Blaze finds himself in way over his head – and just as Vengeance's flame is beginning to burn again, Johnny's may yet get snuffed out! Because a Blaze has no place in the undersea kingdom of Atlantis! And as a colossal evil rises in the metaphysical realm, a dangerous emissary arrives from a violent future: say hello to Ghost Rider 2099!

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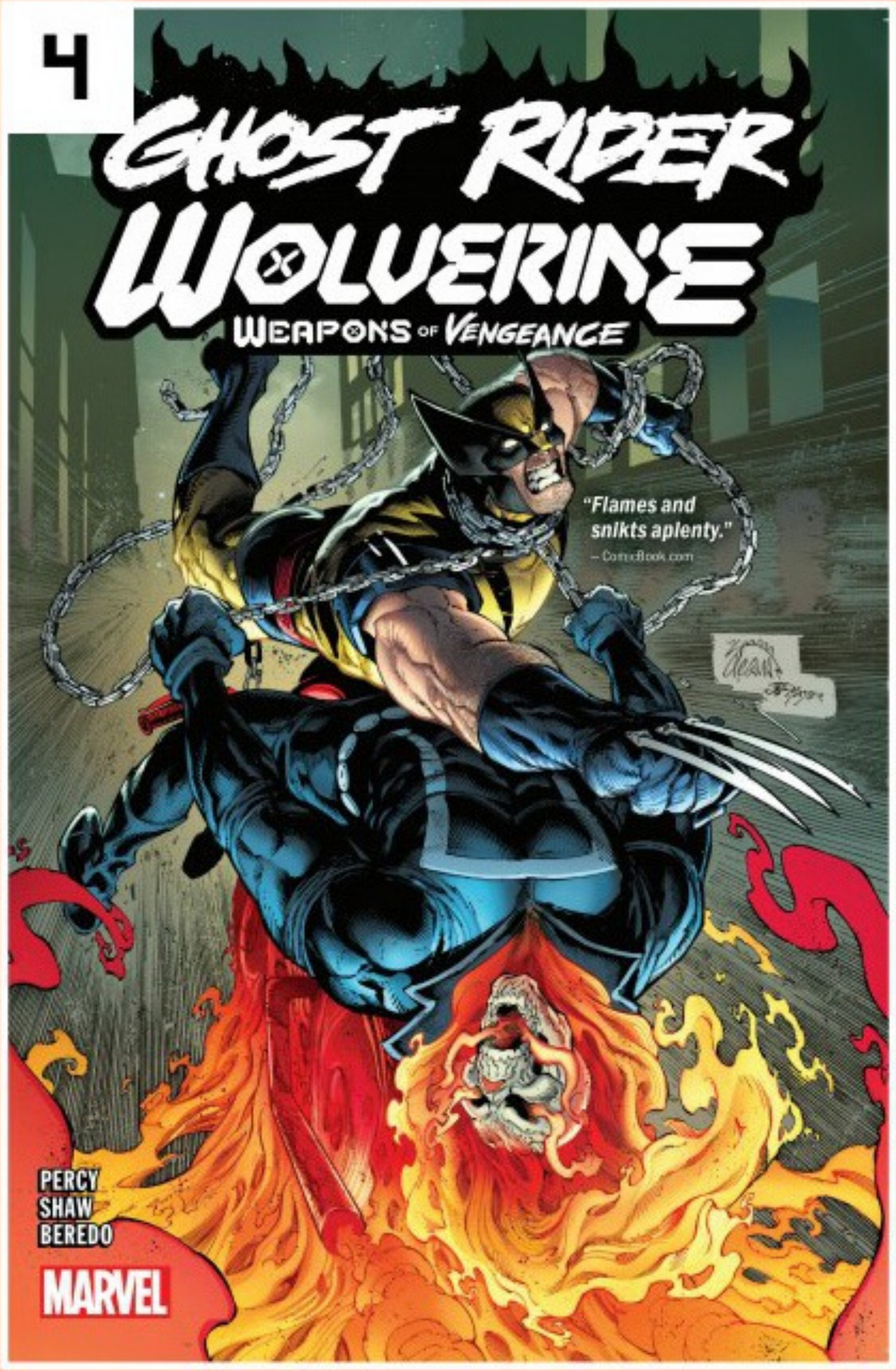
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SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE
VENGEANCE UNCHAINED

When innocent blood is spilled, a ***Spirit of Vengeance*** *is born, existing to unleash unbridled retribution upon the world. Though it is a curse, some hosts of the Spirit of Vengeance, like* ***Johnny Blaze, A.K.A. Ghost Rider,*** *have managed to shoulder this hellish burden and leverage their powers as a force for good.*

However, heroism is not what the Spirit of Vengeance is meant for, and not all hosts are as virtuous…

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SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE

VENGEANCE UNCHAINED

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1

PEYTON! --STOP RIGHT NOW!
PEYTON!
WHINE

COME ON, NOW, PEYTON. THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT.
STUPID OL' MUTT... SHOULDA HAD YOU NEUTERED.
THEY ONCE CALLED HIM
VENGEANCE

JAMIE, CUT IT OUT! SLOW DOWN!
WHAT?!
SHE WANTS THE MUSIC DOWN!
WHAT ARE WE DOING--OH! OHMYGOD. IS THIS THE SCARECROW? LIKE, *THE* SCARECROW, FROM THE MEME?
YUP. MY UNCLE SAID WE COULD DROP BY. HE BUYS COWS FROM BILLY, TO FEED THE *POLAR BEAR* HE GOT FROM ANTARCTICA.
I DON'T THINK THERE ARE POLAR BEARS IN ANTARCTICA, TYLER. JUST AT THE NORTH POLE. THEY DON'T EAT COWS EITHER.
WELL, THAT'S WHAT MY UNCLE TOLD ME! I'VE SEEN THE CRATE HE KEEPS IT IN.
I DARE YOU TO *KISS IT,* GRACE.
$#@$ YOU, KAYLA. *YOU* KISS IT.
WHAT'S THE MATTER, BABE? *SCARED?*
SHE'S *TOTALLY* SCARED, JAMIE.
LIFT ME UP.
I'M NOT SCARED OF *NOTHING.* CERTAINLY NOT OF SOME BACKYARD HALLOWEEN DECORATION.

NOT GONNA LIE, HE'S KINDA *HANDSOME.*
THOSE TEETH...
COME ON, MR. SCARECROW, SHOW ME HOW A *REAL* MAN KISSES!
MMMM-HMMM.
WOOOO!
%&@! SHE ACTUALLY DID IT!
WHOA!
OOF!
WHUMP

JAMIE, YOU **BUTTWIPE.** YOU DID THAT ON **PURPOSE!**
WHAT? I SLIPPED!
ON WHAT?!
OOOH, JAMIE, YOU'RE IN **TROUBLE.**
UGH, I NEED TO TOUCH UP MY LIPSTICK NOW. ARE YOU HAPPY, KAYLA?! IS THAT WHAT YOU WANTED?
HUH? HEY! WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!
WAIT UP, BABE!
HIT IT, JAMIE!
YOU @#$%@. YOU BETTER NOT LEAVE ME HERE--
HAVE FUN, LOVEBIRDS! WE'LL PICK YOU UP LATER!
UGH.

THEY'RE JUST MESSIN' AROUND. JAMIE'S PROBABLY TAKIN' HER TO SOME MAKE-OUT SPOT. HIS ASS'LL BE BACK HERE IN TEN MINUTES, TOPS.
YEAH. UM. JUST SO YOU KNOW, I'M NOT TRYING TO MAKE THINGS AWKWARD OR ANYTHING, BUT THEY'RE TOTALLY TRYING TO, LIKE, SET US UP...
YEAH...?
BUT I'M COOL JUST, LIKE, BEING FRIENDS, OKAY? I'M NOT REALLY LOOKING FOR A RELATIONSHIP RIGHT NOW.
YEAH, NO. DEFINITELY. ME TOO.

30 MINUTES LATER...
THEY'RE CHANGING A TIRE. SHOULD BE HERE IN, LIKE, TWENTY.
'KAY.
GETTIN' KINDA COLD. I'LL BORROW THIS GUY'S SHIRT. I'M SURE HE WON'T MIND--
AAAAAH!!!
CHILL. IT'S JUST A MOUSE.
?!
HEEEEEY. UM, I THINK I FELT A LITTLE... **EXCITEMENT** FROM YOU JUST NOW.
HEHEHE.
OKAY. SO WHAT? WHY'S THAT FUNNY?

CAN YOU *STOP* LAUGHING? IT'S NOT FUNNY.
TYLER, GET *OFF* ME.
I THINK YOU OWE ME AN APOLOGY.
I DON'T OWE YOU %$@#. GET OFF!
TYLER, YOU'RE *HURTING* ME!
YOU'VE BEEN DISRESPECTING ME ALL DAY. I DON'T APPRECIATE IT.
THINK YOU'RE BEING CUTE, *HUH?* WELL, I GOT %@#% NEWS FOR YOU, %@#. YOU'RE *NOT* CUTE.
TYLER...

NyYYAGH! WHAT THE HELL--?!
UCK-- HAAUUGNH...
AAAAAAAAH!
YOU HAVE CROSSED THE PATH OF VENGEANCE...
...AND FOR THAT, I THANK YOU.

HOLY @#$%! HOLY @#$%! OH GOD, OH GOD-- AUCH! IT HURTS!!!
...
...
WHUMP
HRRR...
CHUCKA CHUCKA CHUCKA CHUCKA
SCREEE
GOT SOME LIFE LEFT IN YOU AFTER ALL, HUH?

JOHNNY BLAZE'S BEAUTIFUL DILEMMA
THE SIRENS OF KRONOS.
JOHNNY, JOHNNY...
BLAZE...
I JUST *LOVE* HOW THAT NAME ROLLS OFF THE TONGUE.
YOU'VE BEEN A *BAD BOY,* JOHNNY.
URK--
WE WERE CONTENT TO LEAVE YOU ALONE AFTER WE ESCAPED THE CAVE YOU TRAPPED US IN.* BUT YOU *HAD* TO CHASE AFTER US.
NOW, I'M AFRAID, WE'LL HAVE TO PEEL THAT BEAUTIFUL *SKIN* OFF YOUR BODY. I'VE BEEN IN THE MARKET FOR A NEW COAT.
*WAY BACK IN *GHOST RIDER (1982) #52,* GHOST READERS! --ED.

IF YOU LADIES ARE DONE GAWKIN'...
...WHERE'S THE *SHELL?*
THE SHELL... OH, YES, I THINK WE FOUND SOMETHING THAT MIGHT INTEREST YOU.
YOU'RE WELCOME TO CONDUCT A CAVITY SEARCH TO FIND IT...
JUST SO LONG AS YOU KEEP YOUR PASSIONATE LITTLE *FRIEND* TUCKED AWAY.
WE'VE HAD A LOT OF TIME TO THINK ABOUT YOU, BLAZE. WE KNOW THAT AT THE END OF THE DAY, YOU'RE JUST A WARM-BLOODED MAN LIKE THE REST OF THEM.
AS LONG AS WE APPEAL TO THAT PIERCING MALE GAZE OF YOURS...
...YOU'RE *HELPLESS.* UNABLE TO SUMMON THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE, BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS, YOU DON'T REALLY *WANT* TO.
UH-HUH. EXCEPT YOU FORGOT SOMETHIN'. YOU'RE TALKING TO A *STUNTMAN.* KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?

VROOOM
I GET BORED QUICKLY.
SPLASH
YOU LADIES FLATTER YOURSELVES TOO MUCH. HONESTLY, I BARELY REMEMBER YOU TO BEGIN WITH.
UGH!
URK--
BAM
NUH-- NO!
SHRIIIIP
GASP
GOING SOMEWHERE ALREADY?

SHAME I CAN'T PLUCK YOUR EYEBALLS OUT IN THIS FORM...
YOU BROUGHT THIS ON YOURSELF, SPIRIT. PERHAPS WE OUGHT TO BURY *YOU* IN A CAVE--
--IF THE FALL DOESN'T KILL YOU FIRST--
HEH.
WHUMP

BOOOM
TIME TO FRY, @#$%&@#.

THUD
NOW, ABOUT THAT SHELL...
...I WON'T ASK AGAIN.
FIRST SMART CHOICE YOU'VE MADE IN YOUR LIFE.
WHY DO YOU WANT IT SO BADLY?
I CAN HEAR THE SCREAMS... ECHOING...CALLING TO ME.
CAUSE TROUBLE AGAIN, SIRENS...AND MY VENGEANCE WILL BE *FINAL*.

THE FRIEND OF VENGEANCE
YOUR NAME IS BILLY.
WE'VE HAD THIS CONVERSATION BEFORE?
THAT'S FASTER 'N THE LAST TIME.
YEP. IT'S A CYCLE, I THINK. YOU GET, ER, ACTIVATED. SOMETHIN' SETS YOU OFF. THE MEMORIES KICK IN, AND THEN, BEFORE TOO LONG, YOU JUST...FLAME OUT.
DIDN'T HAVE THE HEART TO JUST THROW YOU AWAY LIKE SOME DECORATION. BUT I DIDN'T QUITE KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH YOU, CONSIDERIN' YER ODD... NATURE.
HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN HERE?
COUPLE 'A YEARS, PAL.
AH KNEW YER HOST. TRAINED WITH HIM IN THE FORCE. INJURY HAD ME QUITTIN' EARLY, BUT MICHAEL...HOO BOY, HE WAS A REAL HOTSHOT.
MICHAEL...
MICHAEL IS IN TROUBLE.

YOU KEEP SAYIN' THAT. BUT THEN YOU SHUT DOWN BEFORE YOU GET THE CHANCE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT.
OUR SEPARATION IS... MOST UNUSUAL. IT LEAVES ME **WEAK**. I MUST FIND HIM.
I KNOW. BEEN TRYIN' TO HELP YOU. EVER SINCE I FOUND YOU OVER THE GRAVES OF MICHAEL'S FAMILY.
BUT I COULDN'T RIGHTLY KEEP A SKELETON HANGIN' AROUND WITHOUT A BIT A' CONTEXT. SO I PUT YOU IN THOSE DIGS. HOPE YOU DON'T MIND.
YOU ARE A GOOD FRIEND, BILLY.
WOO-HOO!
YEE-HAW!
FOUND 'IM!
THAT'S HIM, UNCLE LAWRENCE-- THAT'S THE **FREAK** THAT ATTACKED ME.
EVENIN', BILLY.
LAWRENCE. I THINK THERE MIGHT BE A BIT OF A **MISUNDERSTANDIN'** HERE.

SEEMS TO ME LIKE YOUR *BAG-A'-BONES* FRIEND OVER HERE HURT MY BOY.
WELL, NOW...
...I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE KEEPING STRANGE COMPANY ON MY PROPERTY.
I KEEP A TIGHTER LEASH ON MY *PETS.* I'M RESPONSIBLE LIKE THAT. SO WHATEVER HAPPENS HERE AND NOW, BILLY...IT'S ON *YOU.*
I AM A *SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE.* BE CAREFUL NOT TO TEST ME.
NOW, LAWRENCE, HE DON'T MEAN NOTHIN' BY THAT. LET'S JUST TALK ABOUT THIS--
WE AIN'T INTERESTED IN TALKIN' NO MORE. FAIR'S FAIR, BILLY. MY SON LOST HIS HAND. AND I DON'T WANT TO BEAT ON THE HANDICAPPED. I GUESS THAT LEAVES *YOU...*
LAWRENCE, DON'T DO THIS...

NO.
AUGH!
UNCLE LAWRENCE!!!
BLAMBLAM BLAMBLAM
BILLY...

K'TING
K'TING
K'TING
OOF!
ACK!
BUNT
C'MON, C'MON...POLAR BEAR, GET 'IM, BOY!

WHAT THE HELL, UNCLE LAWRENCE?! THAT'S **NOT** A POLAR BEAR!
CHOMP

EEEE...
...EEEEEEE...
...EEEEEEE...
RRRINCH
EEEEEEE--
KA-CHUNK
HOLY $#@%!
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

MICHAEL...
"DO NOT LOSE HOPE. I AM COMING FOR YOU. BUT FIRST...
"...I MUST RESTORE MY FLAME.
"FROM ANOTHER... AN IMPOSTOR. IT WILL RESTORE ME TO ENOUGH STRENGTH WHERE I CAN BE OF USE TO YOU."
UNTIL THEN, MICHAEL...
...BE PATIENT.
"IF YOU CAN HEAR ME OUT THERE..."
...LEAVE ME BE, VENGEANCE. I'M JUST THE BAIT.

YOU'RE THE ONE THEY WANT.

2

Years ago...
Two months before Zarathos.
I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU GAVE UP RIDING, JOHNNY. BUT I KNOW YOU'RE NO COWARD.
SO I'M GONNA MAKE YOU A BET.
IF YOU CAN HOLD YOUR BREATH UNDERWATER LONGER THAN I CAN, THEN CONGRATULATIONS, I'LL TAKE MY BIKINI OFF.
BUT IF I CAN HOLD MY BREATH LONGER...
...YOU HAVE TO RIDE YOUR MOTORCYCLE AGAIN. ONE REAL STUNT.

HELLUVA BET, ROXANNE. WHAT'S IT MATTER TO YOU WHETHER I RIDE AGAIN OR NOT?
DADDY'S SICK, JOHNNY. I'M SURE YOU NOTICED.
'COURSE I DID. YOU KNOW HOW SORRY I AM ABOUT THAT.
HE'LL SLEEP A LOT BETTER KNOWING YOU CAN KEEP DOING THE STUNTS WITH THE CIRCUS WHEN HE CAN'T DO THEM ANY LONGER.
I JUST WANT HIM TO KNOW EVERYTHING'S GONNA BE OKAY.
IT WILL BE, ROXANNE. I'M WORKING ON A WAY TO HELP HIM. YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY...
...UNLESS YOU'RE REALLY COMFORTABLE IN THAT BIKINI.

HEY, WE'RE SUPPOSED TO JUMP--
--TOGETHER--
SPLASH

ARE YOU LOST? BECAUSE YOU'RE GOING THE *WRONG* WAY.
TODAY. BOTTOM OF THE INDIAN OCEAN.
JOHNNY BLAZE VS. THE 14TH PENAL COLONY OF ATLANTIS
YOU TOLD ME TO TAKE YOU TO THE PRISON COLONY OF *DEATH SPRINGS.*
THAT'S WHERE I'M TAKING YOU.
NOPE. PRISON'S EAST. YOU'RE TAKING ME SOUTH.
YOU THINK I'M *STUPID,* FISH-BOY?
N-NO, OF COURSE NOT. IT'S JUST...NO ONE EVER *WANTS* TO GO TO DEATH SPRINGS.
IT'S FULL OF THE WORST CRIMINALS OF ATLANTIS AND *BEYOND.* AND YOU JUST WANT TO... WALK RIGHT UP TO THE GATES? *WHY?*
BECAUSE A LITTLE SHELL CARRIED THE ECHOES OF THE ONE PERSON IN THAT PRISON WHO'S *INNOCENT.* SO *PICK UP THE PACE,* BOTTOM-FEEDER.

THAT'S ENOUGH. I KNOW YOU'RE TRYING TO LEAD ME INTO A *TRAP.*
LET ME GUESS: SOME OF YOUR LOSER FRIENDS ARE WAITING TO AMBUSH ME.
IT'S *NOT* GOING TO WORK.
URK!
HAHHH... UNGH...OKAY, OKAY.
I'M SORRY. I JUST...I'M SO TIRED.
MAYBE IF I COULD TAKE A LITTLE...UH... A *BREAK...?*
THE MIGRANTS WHOSE BOAT YOU ATTACKED-- DID YOU GIVE THEM A "BREAK" BEFORE YOU *SUNK* THEIR SHIP?
NOT SO FUNNY TO PICK ON THE HELPLESS NOW, IS IT?
UM, UHHH...
YOUR "BREAK" IS THAT YOUR HEAD IS STILL CONNECTED TO YOUR BODY. PRAY IT *REMAINS* THAT WAY.
NO PROBLEM, BOSS. THANK YOU.

I JUST... I WAS ONLY CURIOUS... NOT THAT IT'S, AH, *RELEVANT*... WHY YOU DON'T JUST USE YOUR *MOTORCYCLE* TO GET THERE IF YOU CAN HEAR THE ECHOES?
WHY DO *I* NEED TO CARRY IT?
IT'S, UH, IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS. FORGET I ASKED.
I WAS JUST MUSING, YOU KNOW. HEHEHE.
I'LL JUST DO ALL THE WORK, THEN.
LUCKY ME.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK
SHEEEK
HI. I, UH, I'M A WAYWARD CRIMINAL WHO IS... VOLUNTARILY CHOOSING TO TURN MYSELF IN TO THIS PENAL COLONY IN AN ATTEMPT TO TAKE *ACCOUNTABILITY* FOR MY ACTIONS.
SHEEEK
NO.
PLEASE! PLEASE, YOU GOTTA HELP ME!
YOU CAN'T LEAVE ME OUTSIDE WITH *HIM.*
THIS... THIS *SURFACE-DWELLER* HE'S... HE'S CRAZY.
HE'S GONNA *KILL ME!* HE'S GONNA--
SKREEEE
WHAT *LAND-BREATHER* DARES THREATEN THE LIFE OF AN ATLANTEAN?

I DARE.
SLAM
THOK
YOU ARE ENFORCERS OF AN *UNJUST* SYSTEM.
POLITICS AND FEAR HAVE POISONED YOUR WAYS, RESULTING IN *INNOCENT* LIVES LOST.
BUT YOU DO NOT CARE--
THUNK
WE WILL NOT BE LECTURED ABOUT OUR DUTIES BY A *SURFACE DWELLER.*

YOU THINK WE HAVE FORGOTTEN OUR OATH BECAUSE OURS IS THE KINGDOM'S MOST REMOTE OUTPOST?
YEAH! THAT'S RIGHT! EAT #$@%, YOU PSYCHO--
WHUD
KTHUNK
KTHUNK
KTHUNK
HNN... RRRR...
YOU WISHED TO KNOCK ON THE GATES OF OUR CONDEMNED...
...NOW YOU MAY JOIN THEM.

JOHNNY.
MMMM.
I WISH WE COULD STAY HERE FOREVER. JUST THIS MOMENT.
BUT I FEEL SO GUILTY SAYING THAT.
'CUS OF YOUR DAD?
YEAH. HE'S IN SO MUCH PAIN. HE'S GOING THROUGH HELL.
IT'S LIKE THERE'S THIS BIG CLOUD THAT WON'T LET ME ENJOY WHAT I'M FEELING...
...EVEN THOUGH IT FEELS SO RIGHT.
YOU DESERVE TO BE HAPPY FOREVER, ROXANNE. BUT IF THIS ONE FLEETING MOMENT IS ALL WE GET...
"...I'LL CONSIDER MYSELF LUCKY I EVER HAD IT."
HNNN....

AH, THE *GHOST RIDER* WAKES.
I'VE HEARD OF YOU, **DEMON.** A NIGHTMARE CONJURED FROM THE MINDS OF SURFACE DWELLERS.
THE MERE SIGHT OF YOU INSPIRES FEAR...
...BUT YOU ARE JUST ANOTHER SAD MAN.
WHY DO YOU HAVE THIS SHELL?
I'M STARTING A *COLLECTION.*
ZZZAAPPPP
UGH!
I AM ***NOT*** IN THE MOOD FOR GAMES. YOU CLAIMED YOU COULD HEAR SCREAMS COMING FROM IT.
WE HEAR NO SUCH THING.

THE SCREAMS BELONG TO A WOMAN YOU LABELED A *SEA WITCH.* SHE CRIES OUT FOR VENGEANCE.
FWOOSH
AND I AM HERE TO *DELIVER* IT.
AND IF YOU ARE THE WARDEN HERE...
...*YOU* ARE THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR INFLICTING PAIN ON HER AND COUNTLESS OTHERS.
NO! STOP! STOP THIS SORCERY!
WHAT YOU'RE FEELING IS ONLY WHAT YOU YOURSELF HAVE COMMITTED.
NOW TELL ME...WHERE ARE YOU KEEPING THE SEA WITCH?

ZAAAP-- BZT
AAAHSUFF USSS--
TOO BROKEN TO TALK NOW. I SEE MY PENANCE STARE WAS TOO MUCH FOR YOU TO BEAR.
I SUPPOSE I'LL JUST HAVE TO ASK SOMEONE ELSE.
BOOM
DO ANY AMONG YOU KNOW WHERE THE SEA WITCH IS BEING HELD? SPEAK NOW, AND I MIGHT BE MERCIFUL--
OR NOT.
SHOONT
UCK!

DID YOU THINK YOU COULD JUST WANDER AROUND A SECURE PRISON UNMOLESTED?
YOU ARE *BOLD*, DEMON. EITHER YOU'RE IDIOTIC AND DELUSIONAL... OR YOU SEEK YOUR OWN SUFFERING.
YEAH. I GET THAT A LOT.
THERE'S A REASON I HAD ONE OF YOUR PUNKS GIVE ME AND MY MOTORCYCLE A RIDE OVER HERE...
WHOOSH
WHOOSH
WHOOS
I WANTED TO SEE *YOUR* DEFENSES WITHOUT SHOWING YOU *MINE.*
KTASH
BUT THE TRUTH IS, YOU GUYS ARE THE ONES WHO ARE OUTNUMBERED. THAT'S THE THING ABOUT PRISONS...

...THEY'RE ALWAYS OVER-POPULATED.
B'KASH
B'KASH
B'KASH
SECURE THE PRISONERS!
THE DEMON IS MINE!
VROOOM
K'CHAK
YOU HAVE LOST YOUR PRISON. NOW TELL ME-- WHERE IS THE SEA WITCH?
DID YOU THINK WE WOULDN'T HAVE FAIL-SAFES?

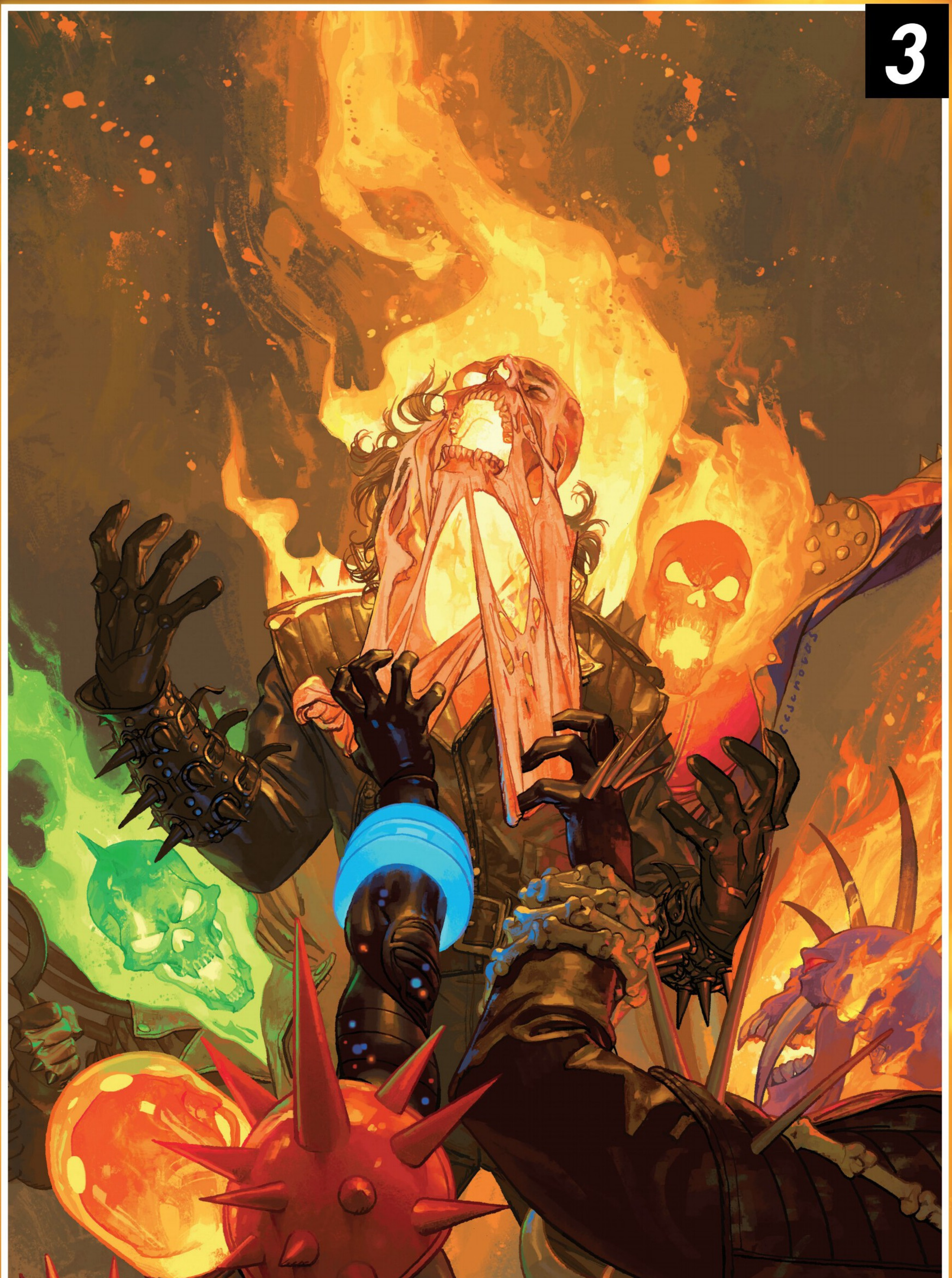
IN THE EVENT OF A PRISON RIOT... THE VOLCANO IS *AWAKENED.*
RRRRRUUUUUUUMMMMBLE
NONE OF US WILL MAKE IT OUT ALIVE.
THE SCREAMS...I HEAR THEM... CLOSER NOW.
THE SEA WITCH...
THE WHOLE PLACE IS COMING APART!
SWIM TO HIGHER LEVEL!
FOLLOW THE SOUTH TIDE IF YOU WISH TO SURVIVE. MY JOURNEY LIES BELOW...
RRRRUUUUUUUUMMMBLE

I HEAR YOUR CRIES, INNOCENT ONE...
YOU NEED NOT SCREAM ANY LONGER...
...FOR I AM WITH YOU.

THANK YOU, SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE, FOR LIBERATING ME.
I HEARD YOUR CRIES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD. I COULD NOT IGNORE THEM.
I WAS NOT CRYING FOR MYSELF. I WAS FEARFUL FOR ALL THE INNOCENT LIVES. FOR WHAT IS TO COME...
MY NAME IS KAUTHAR. CENTURIES AGO, IN MY YOUTH, MY MAGIKS BROUGHT A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE LIKE YOU TO THE OCEAN'S DEPTHS*--AND THIS HAS BEEN THE PRICE I PAID.
BUT I CAN BE SILENT NO LONGER, AS THE BLOOD HUNT HAS AWAKENED AN ANCIENT EVIL.
THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE.
*GHOST RIDER #32. (2009) --EDITOR.
HE LIVES TO BREAK THE WILL OF THE MOST NOBLE AMONG YOU. TO USE YOUR WORLD AS HIS PLAYGROUND OF SUFFERING.
TO PREY ON THOSE WHO DESERVE IT THE LEAST.
I DO NOT YET KNOW IF HE HAS CHOSEN A HOST--BUT I FEAR YOU WILL BE UNABLE TO STOP HIM.
LEAVE THAT TO ME.
HOW I WISH I COULD.
BUT THE WARDEN WAS RIGHT. YOU ARE TRULY LOST. YOU DO NOT EVEN KNOW YOUR OWN NATURE.
YOU DO NOT KNOW THE SECRET THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE ARE BUILT ON.

NO... THAT CAN'T BE TRUE...
IT JUST CAN'T...
NO MORE LIES, NO MORE DECEPTIONS, NO TRICK BARGAINS.
I'M SORRY, JOHNNY BLAZE.

[redacted]



3

DANNY!
OOPS! SORRY!
NOOO! THE FRISBEE'S IN THE WATER!
NOW WHAT ARE WE GONNA DO?
UNCLE MARTY SAID NEVER GO IN THE WATER!
IT'S JUST A FEW STEPS. I CAN GET IT BACK!
WAIT!

GRAAAAAH!
HAA-- YAAH!
THUCK
C'MON, DANNY!
RUN!

-HUFF-
-HUFF, HUFF-
ARE YOU OKAY, DANNY?
-HUFF- Y-YEAH.
-HUFF- -HUFF- THAT WAS VERY *STUPID* OF YOU.
BARB...YOU WERE *REALLY* BRAVE.
YEAH, WELL, WHAT WAS I *SUPPOSED* TO DO?
I DUNNO, BUT...I WOULD HAVE BEEN TOO SCARED. I JUST...
I WISH I COULD BE BRAVE LIKE YOU.
YOU'RE MY LITTLE BROTHER, DANNY. NOBODY GETS TO MESS WITH YOU.
'CEPT ME.
WE GOTTA PROTECT EACH OTHER, RIGHT? I'LL KEEP YOU SAFE, DANNY...

CYPRESS HILLS CEMETERY. NOW.
"...AS LONG AS I'M *ALIVE.*"
BARBARA KETCH
THE FIRE ISN'T SPREADING, BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO PUT IT OUT.
DANNY KETCH'S GREATEST LOSS
IT'S AS IF IT'S *MEANT* FOR YOU, DANNY.
THANK YOU, SARA. IT'S GOOD TO KNOW THAT YOU'RE HERE AS THE *CARETAKER* TO KEEP WATCH OVER ANY RUMBLINGS FROM HELL.
THE ARSON IS A WARNING, THAT EVEN IN THE AFTERLIFE, MY SISTER IS NOT SAFE...
WHOEVER THEY ARE, THEY HAVE MY *ATTENTION.*

THERE WERE MORE GRAVES MARKED BY FIRE. ROXANNE SIMPSON AND LINDA BADILINO.
MEANT TO BE FOUND BY MICHAEL BADILINO HIMSELF, MOST LIKELY. A MESSAGE. BADILINO'S SISTER. MY SISTER. AND JOHNNY'S WIFE. SOMEONE IS COMING AFTER THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE...
...AND THEY KNOW HOW TO HIT US WHERE IT HURTS. WHAT ARE WE DEALING WITH, SARA?
TRUTHFULLY, DANNY...
...I HAVE NO IDEA. THIS ISN'T SOMETHING WE'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED BEFORE. THE MAGICS IT'S USING ARE DIFFERENT. NEW.
WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S GOT JOHNNY BLAZE RATTLED.
THAT'S HARD TO DO. ANY IDEA WHERE JOHNNY IS NOW?

NEVADA.
SHOULDA STAYED QUIET OUT HERE IN THE DESERT, ROULETTE.
CONSIDER YOURSELF WARNED.
STAY OUT OF MY AFFAIRS, SPIRIT!
SHOOM SHOOM SHOOM SHOOM
JOHNNY BLAZE VS. ROULETTE
FIGURED YOU'D STAY GONE AFTER YOUR NEPHEW WAS KILLED. BUT AS LONG AS YOUR CASTLE WAS STILL STANDING, THERE WAS ALWAYS A CHANCE YOU'D COME BACK.*
*SEE WBN: BLOOD HUNT.
SO I SHOOK THE GROUND AROUND IT, SENDING A BIT OF HELLFIRE INTO THE FAULT LINES.
RRRRRUUUUUMBLE

YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT.
FWOOMP
UNH!
HURTS, DOESN'T IT?
I'VE *EVOLVED.*
NOW MY FLAMES WORK LIKE A *VIRUS,* SLOWLY INFECTING YOUR ENTIRE BEING. YOUR FLAMES ARE USELESS AGAINST IT.
KAFF!

KER-CHUNK
WHAT?!
NO!
THERE'RE TWO OF YOU?!
JOHNNY.
DANNY.
YOU OKAY?
I WILL BE. ROULETTE'S FLAMES DIE WHEN HE DIES.
"DIES"?
HOW'D YOU KNOW WHERE TO FIND ME?

SAW THE CARETAKER-- SOMEONE'S BEEN DESECRATING OUR FAMILY'S GRAVES. SENDING A MESSAGE TO THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE. YOU, ME. EVEN MICHAEL BADILINO.
THOUGHT I'D SEE WHAT YOU KNOW. THIS GUY HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THEM?
HUH. I JUST LEARNED OF THE EXISTENCE OF A NEW SPIRIT FROM A SEA-WITCH. HEARD ROULETTE WAS LOOSE TOO AND FIGURED IT WAS HIM.
BUT IT'S NOT.
SINCE WE'RE HERE THOUGH, WE MIGHT AS WELL TAKE CARE OF HIM FOR GOOD.
NO! YOU CAN'T--
KLINK

KA-
RACK
NNNNNG...
HISSS
HISSSSS
LET'S SEE YOU COME BACK FROM *THAT.*
NOW I FEEL BETTER.
IF HE WASN'T OUR GUY, THEN WHO *IS* AFTER US?
IT'S KNOWN AS THE *SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE.* I'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND LEADS ON WHO ITS *HOST* IS, BUT NO LUCK YET.
IT SEEMS THE BLOOD HUNT OPENED A NEW PATHWAY FOR THIS SPIRIT TO TARGET OUR WORLD--
INCLUDING OUR LOVED ONES IN THE AFTERLIFE.
WHOEVER THIS SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE IS, THEY REALLY DON'T WANT US IN THEIR WAY.
WE'RE BEING *HUNTED.* SARA TELL YOU ANYTHING ABOUT WHERE MICHAEL OR VENGEANCE ARE?
WHY DO YOU THINK I'M *HERE?*

FORT WORTHY
"ACCORDING TO SARA, MICHAEL HAD BEEN SEPARATED FROM HIS SPIRIT. MICHAEL'S CURRENT WHEREABOUTS ARE UNKNOWN.
"BUT HIS SPIRIT VISITED SARA RECENTLY, ASKING IF SHE KNEW WHERE KOWALSKI IS."
"USING HIS CORRUPTION STARE, KOWALSKI HAD TAKEN OVER A WHOLE MILITARY BASE.
"SARA THINKS VENGEANCE IS LOOKING TO STEAL KOWALSKI'S FLAMES."

VENGEANCE
AND THE FLAMES OF CORRUPTION

I KNEW THAT SOMEDAY, ONE OF YOU GHOST RIDERS WOULD COME KNOCKING...
...I JUST DIDN'T THINK IT'D BE *YOU.*
NO OFFENSE, BUT I FORGOT YOU EXISTED, ***VENGEANCE.***
YOU OUGHT TO LOOK IN THE MIRROR, KOWALSKI. YOU STOLE MY *LOOK.* CORRUPTED OUR TRUE PURPOSE.
YOU'D BE SURPRISED BY ALL THE THINGS A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE CAN DO SIMPLY BY EXERTING A LITTLE OF THEIR OWN ***FREE WILL.***
PERHAPS I SHOULD ***SHOW*** YOU. A LITTLE ***CORRUPTION STARE*** MIGHT CLEAR YOUR MIND...
HNNN...
CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR.

YOUR CORRUPTION STARE BETRAYS YOU, KOWALSKI...
...FOR I AM NOTHING MORE THAN AN UNTETHERED SPIRIT.
THERE IS NOTHING TO CORRUPT...
...ONLY MY TRUE NATURE TO REVEAL.
THAT OF MY ORIGINAL FORM...
...THE FORM OF ZALA.

MY HOST NEEDS ME, MICHAEL...HE NEEDS MY *HELP*. BUT IN THIS STATE, I AM WEAKENED...
...WHICH IS WHY I'VE COME TO TAKE YOUR *FLAME.*
KRAK
OW! MY SKULL!
YOU WANT TO KNOW WHY I TOOK YOUR NAME, VENGEANCE?
BECAUSE I KNEW YOU'D BE FORGOTTEN SOMEDAY.
CHAK
CHIK-CHAK
CHIK-CHAK
OPEN FIRE!
THE GREATEST MISTAKE YOU MADE...
...WAS THINKING YOU'D EVER BE RELEVANT IN A WORLD THAT HAS *ME*.
BRAKA BRAKA BRAKA

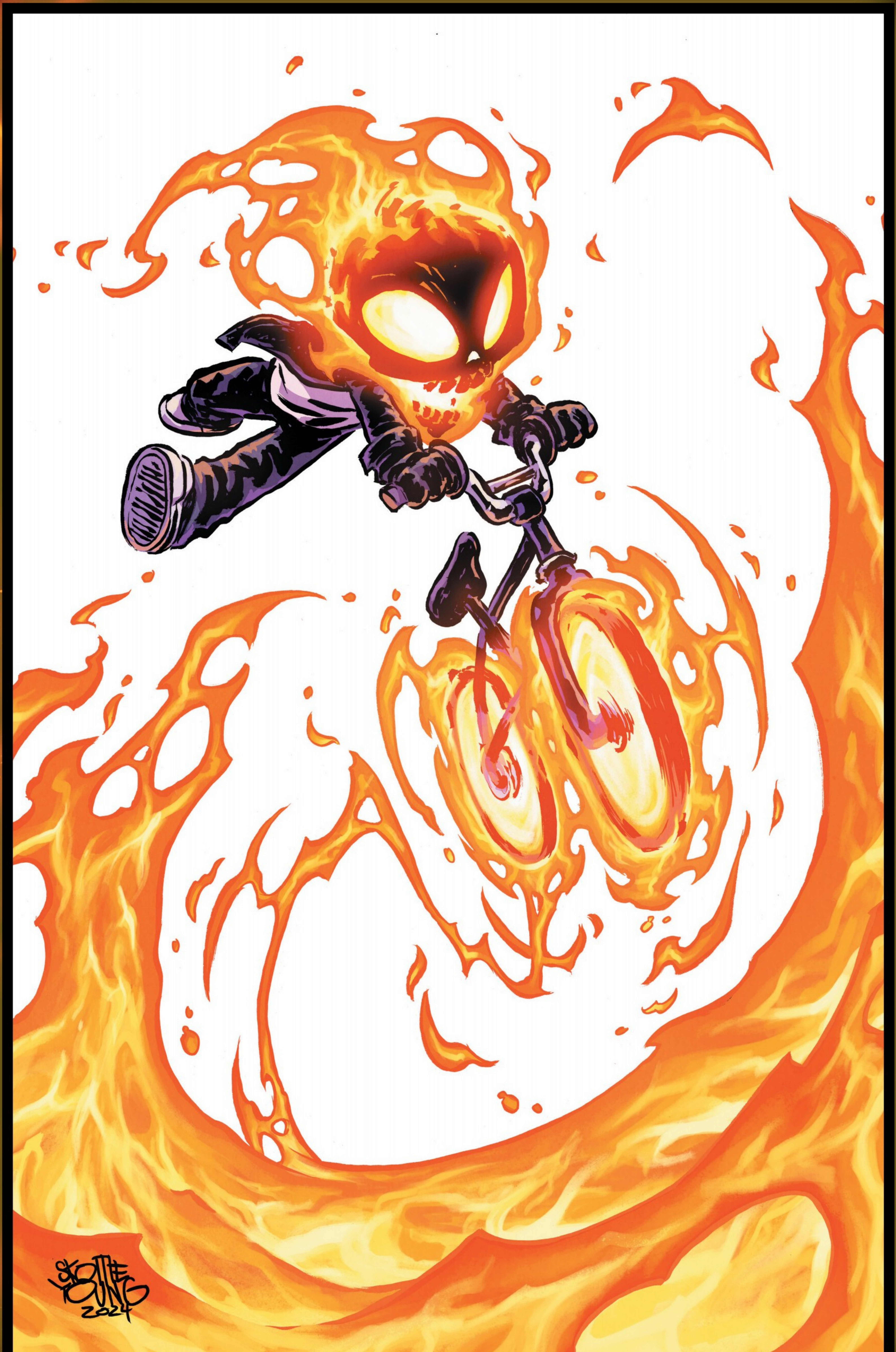
FROM ONE SPIRIT TO ANOTHER: I KNOW YOU'RE STILL STANDING.
EVEN IN YOUR WEAKENED FORM, ALL THAT FIREPOWER AIN'T ENOUGH TO KILL YOU.

NO, YOU REQUIRE A *SPECIAL* KIND OF FIREPOWER.
AND I AM HAPPY TO OBLIGE.
BLAM
UNH!

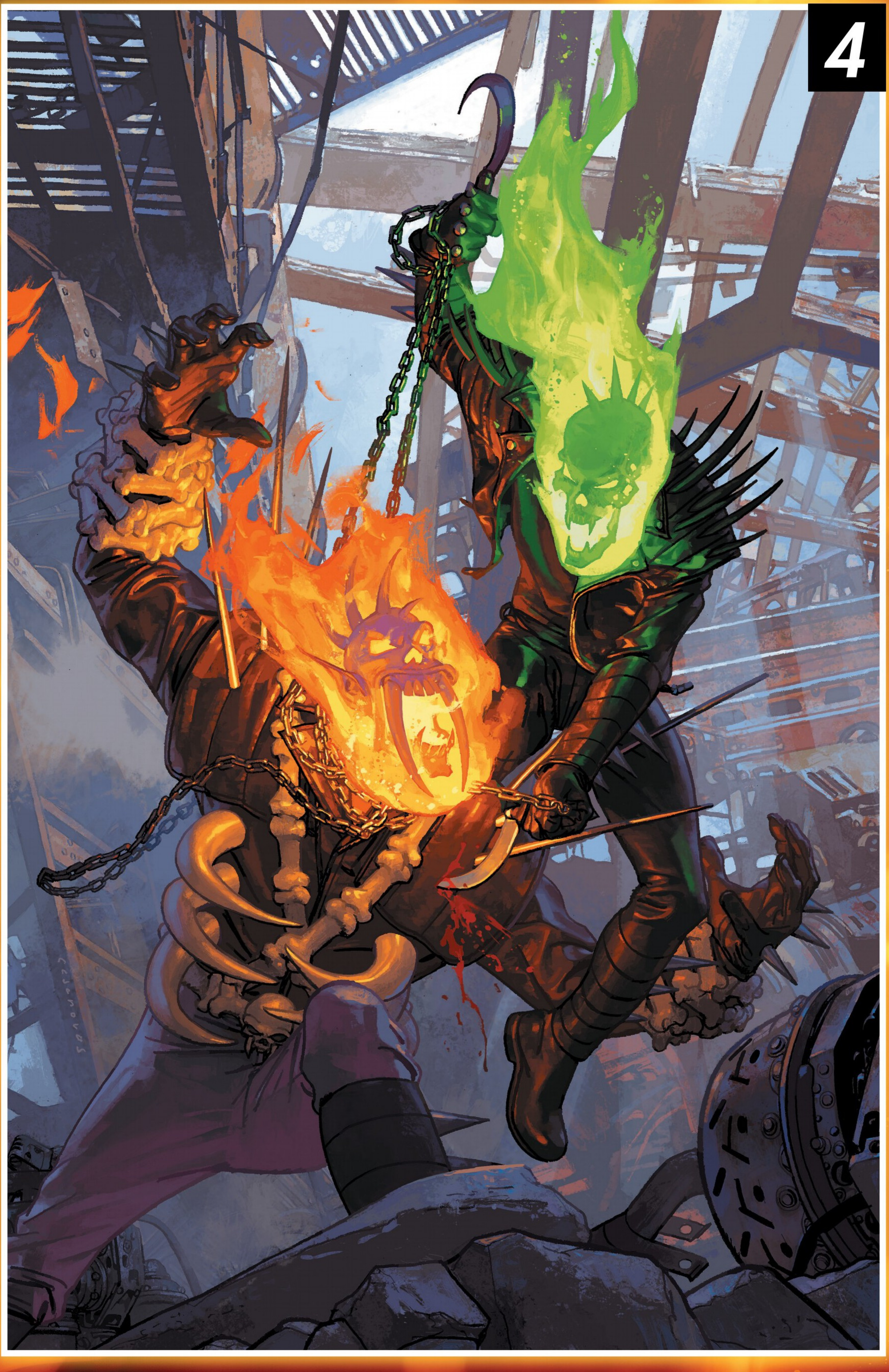
HURTS LIKE A @#$%, DOESN'T IT? THIS ISN'T ANY NORMAL SHOTGUN.
THIS ONE'S LACED WITH THE STUFF OF HELL. IT WAS A GIFT FROM YOUR VERY OWN HOST, MICHAEL BADILINO.*
*SEE GHOST RIDER (2008) #30.
BUT I GUESS I HAVE TO WASTE A FEW ROUNDS ON SOME RATPISS LIKE YOU.
SUPPOSE IT'S ONLY FITTING...
KLATCH
...THAT YOU DIE BY THE WEAPON YOUR OWN HOST GAVE ME.
YOU'RE AS FOOLISH AS A SPIRIT AS YOU WERE AS A MAN, KOWALSKI...
...OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WE GET STRONGER WHEN THERE'S A DIRE NEED FOR VENGEANCE TO BE EXACTED?

AND *YOU* HAVE WRONGED A GREAT *MANY* PEOPLE.
KRACK
WHUD
YOUR BIGGEST MISTAKE WAS TAKING MY *NAME*--
--THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TRY TO REWRITE THE BOOK ON VENGEANCE.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WILL BE *FORGOTTEN.*
GLL-LK... M...MMM--
MICHAEL.
MICHAEL? MY HOST? WHAT OF HIM?
PLEASE... JUST HEAR ME OUT...

...I CAN TELL YOU WHERE HE IS.


SKOTTIE YOUNG 2024

SKOTTIE YOUNG
#1 VARIANT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BADILINO RESIDENCE. A LONG TIME AGO.
POLICE
OCT 03
DADDY! DADDY!
CAN I WEAR YOUR WORK HAT FOR HALLOWEEN?
SO, MY SON LIKES TO PLAY DRESS-UP, HUH?
UH...
POLICE DEPARTMENT
THE UNIFORM'S NOT A COSTUME.
YOU GOTTA **EARN** THE RIGHT TO WEAR THIS.
OH. OKAY.
OKAY.
DON'T "OKAY" ME, BOY. I'M TALKING TO YOU. DON'T SHUT DOWN ON ME.
SMACK
ARE YOU LISTENING NOW, MIKE?
Y-YES.
GOOD. NOW STOP CRYING.
'CUS I'M NOT RAISING ANY LITTLE @#$%, Y'HEAR?

SIXTEEN YEARS LATER.
11:00 A.M.
8TH PRECINCT, HARLEM.
YOU'RE MAKING A *MISTAKE*, MICHAEL.
I GOTTA DO SOMETHING WITH MY LIFE, SIS. THIS IS ALL I KNOW.
I GET THAT. BUT COMING BACK *HOME?* I JUST DON'T KNOW IF IT'S A GOOD IDEA.
I HAD TO COME BACK. IN CASE DAD EVER...
YOU KNOW.
DAD'S BEEN SOBER *TEN YEARS.* HE'S DOING GREAT.
ACTUALLY, HE'S BEEN REALLY HELPFUL AT MAKING SURE MOM GETS HER DAILY WALKS IN.
I DON'T WANT YOU TO FEEL TRAPPED HERE BECAUSE OF WHO DAD *USED* TO BE.
SERVING WITH THE POLICE IS THE ONLY THING DAD EVER DID THAT I ACTUALLY *ADMIRED.* IT'S MY CHOICE, LINDA.
OKAY. THEN, GO BE GREAT AT IT.
P11
POLICE DEPARTMENT

WANTED TITANIA
CHIEF TELLS ME HE'S GIVING YOU AND PIPER ALL THE HARD BEATS.* KEEP IT UP, YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY TO MAKING LIEUTENANT.
YEAH? HE TOLD ME YOU REQUESTED A *QUIETER* ONE.
WANTED SILVERMANE
I'M GETTIN' OLD, SON.
SO RETIRE. YOU'VE GOT YOUR PENSION.
YOUR MOM'S HOSPITAL BILLS.
THEN LET ME HELP--
NO.
DAILY BUGLE
WANTED THUND
MIKE. YOU'VE HELPED PLENTY. LET ME DO THIS PART WHILE I STILL CAN, OKAY?
DAILY BUGLE
YOU LOOK GOOD IN THE UNIFORM. I'M GLAD I DIDN'T...
DIDN'T SCARE YOU OFF.
WANTED TITANIA
FREE BIRD
WANTED
WHY
NO FISH
AND I'M PROUD OF YOU, DAD. I KNOW I NEVER SAID THAT.
GUESS I JUST DIDN'T BELIEVE THE SOBRIETY WAS GONNA STICK. BUT I'M HAPPY TO BE PROVEN WRONG.

*FOR MORE ON BADILINO'S EARLY OFFICER DAYS, SEE *CODE OF HONOR #1* RELEASED DECEMBER 1996.

8:32P.M.
MIDTOWN.
--NEED BACKUP! GHOST RIDER IS HERE! ADDITIONAL UNKNOWN COMBATANT.
KRASH
POLICE
1029
THE "QUIET" BEAT
THEY'RE GOING EAST--
BACKUP IS EN ROUTE, BUT NEAREST UNIT IS TEN MINUTES AWAY.
CAN'T LET HIM GET AWAY.
BLAM BLAM BLAM
NO, DON'T--
STOP!
BLACKOUT GOT AWAY. BECAUSE OF YOU.

S-STOP **RIGHT THERE,** GHOST RIDER! Y-YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!
YOU. **BADILINO.** YOUR SON HAS BEEN TRYING TO ENTRAP ME.
YOU LEAVE MY SON ALONE--
SOMETHING'S WRONG. YOU SMELL OF **MEPHISTO.** WHAT DEAL HAVE YOU MADE WITH HIM?
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT-- **URK--**
ME? I DIDN'T TOUCH THIS MAN...
NO!
...NOT YET, ANYWAY.
FWAAAASH
YOU HAVE HURT PEOPLE. INNOCENT PEOPLE.
Y-YES, I KNOW. I KNOW I HAVE.
MEPHISTO SEEKS TO USE YOU. YOUR **DARKNESS.** BUT HOW, I DO NOT KNOW.
I CANNOT TAKE THE CHANCE.
AAAAAUGH!

DAYS LATER.
BADILINO RESIDENCE.
DAD? DAD, WHAT ARE YOU DOING--YOU'RE DRINKING AGAIN?
IT'S THE ONLY THING THAT NUMBS THE PAIN. FROM THE BURNS.
LET'S GET YOU SOME HELP. COME ON, DAD--
DON'T TOUCH ME!
MICHAEL NEVER KNEW WHEN THE HELL TO LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE. PUT OUR FAMILY ON THAT DAMN FREAK'S RADAR AND I'M THE ONE WHO GOT HIS FACE BURNED OFF.
DAD? YOU'RE NOT MAKING SENSE.
DON'T YOU GET IT?
THIS IS ALL YOUR BROTHER'S FAULT!
URK--

30 MINUTES LATER.
WEEE-OOO WEE-OOO
NO, NO, NO, NO!
LINDA! MOM!
COME ON-- NO--STAY WITH ME--

"MICHAEL. I WASN'T MYSELF. THERE MUSTA BEEN SOMETHIN' IN THE FLAMES THAT GHOST RIDER HIT ME WITH. I THINK...I THINK THE DEMON DID SOMETHING TO ME."
F.D. N.Y.
AMBULANCE
YOU WERE DRINKING AGAIN, DAD. THE ONLY DEMON I SEE IS *YOU.*
YOU KILLED MOM. KILLED LINDA. HOW COULD YOU DO THAT?
I LOVED YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR SISTER. MICHAEL, I'VE BEEN SOBER TEN YEARS. YOU KNOW I'D NEVER...NEVER GO THAT FAR. YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT ME.
IT WAS ALL THE GHOST RIDER'S FAULT...

SOME TIME LATER.
YOU'VE SUFFERED SO MUCH, MICHAEL. YOUR POOR SISTER, YOUR MOTHER... ALL KILLED BY ONE DRUNKEN LUNATIC.
YOU BECAME A COP TO PROTECT PEOPLE. BUT YOU COULDN'T PROTECT THEM FROM YOUR OWN FATHER.
I CHECKED THE REPORTS. INTERVIEWED HIS PARTNER. MY DAD WAS TELLING THE TRUTH. GHOST RIDER BLASTED HIM. FRIED HIS SKIN. DROVE HIM MAD. THIS ISN'T ON MY DAD.
BUT HE WAS DRINKING. AND YOU KNOW HOW HE GETS. YOU'LL NEVER KNOW, WILL YOU? HOW MUCH OF YOUR FATHER'S VIOLENCE WAS THE INFLUENCE OF DARK MAGIC...OR HIS OWN DARKNESS.
GHOST RIDER HAD A ROLE TO PLAY. I WANT HIM.
I'LL GIVE ANYTHING.

DONE. I WILL CREATE YOU AS A MOCKERY TO HIS IMAGE.
MICHAEL BADILINO, YOU WILL NOW BE KNOWN AS VENGEANCE!

TODAY.
THE SAD STATE OF MICHAEL BADILINO
VENGEANCE... DON'T COME HERE...
BAM
POOF

WHAASH
UNH!
WHAASH
BLEED FOR ME.
NOT... GONNA... WORK...
VENGEANCE IS NOT GONNA SAVE ME.
AND HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE?
BECAUSE I *PRAYED.*
A TELEPATHIC LINK? EXCELLENT.
THEN HE KNOWS OUR EXACT LOCATION. HE WON'T BE ABLE TO RESIST COMING.
DR. KUMAR...

YOU WANNA TORTURE THE GUY INTO THE NEXT CENTURY, BE MY $#@% GUEST.
BUT I'D BELIEVE HIM. WE'VE BEEN AT THIS FOR SIX MONTHS. THAT DEMON AIN'T COMIN'.
BENTO. I DID NOT HIRE YOU FOR YOUR EXPERTISE IN DEMON MOTIVATION.
JUST TELLING IT LIKE I SEE IT, DOC.
MIGHT HAVE BETTER LUCK JUST CHOPPING HIS HEAD OFF TO SEE IF THE DEMON'S MORE MOTIVATED TO **AVENGE** HIM.
I'LL HAPPILY DO THE HONORS.
FOR A **FEE**, OF COURSE.
LAY A HAND ON MY SUBJECT AND YOU WILL LOSE IT. PERHAPS I'LL SEND YOU BACK TO THE PRISON CELL I FOUND YOU IN--
WHUMP

HEHEHE. DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY, DOC.
AND DON'T GET US WRONG. WE'RE ALL LIGHTING A CANDLE FOR YOU EVERY DAY SINCE YOU SPRUNG US FROM OUR RESPECTIVE DEATH ROW CELLS ALL OVER THE WORLD...
...BUT WE REALLY FOUND OUR GROOVE HERE AS A TEAM, AND WE'RE GETTING A LITTLE BORED BABYSITTING ONE LONE AMERICAN.
BETTER BORED THAN DEAD. DO NOT FORGET YOU ARE REPLACEABLE.
YOU'RE ALL TOO STUPID TO SEE YOU'VE DOOMED YOURSELVES.

IF YOUR PLAN WAS TO **BREAK** ME...TO GET ME TO GIVE UP THE GOODS ON VENGEANCE...
SORRY TO SAY YOU CAN'T BREAK SOMEONE WHO'S ALREADY BROKEN.
Y'SEE, I USED TO BE A COP. SEEN SOME CRAZY #@%& ON THE JOB IN MY TIME. BUT NOTHIN' AS CRAZY AS WHAT MY DAD DID...
MY DAD...HE WENT NUTS AND KILLED MY MOM AND SISTER. AND THEN I BECAME ACQUAINTED WITH **VENGEANCE** AND GOT A LITTLE GLIMPSE AT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU **DIE.**
FOR A GUY LIKE ME, WHO CRAWLED TO HELL AND BACK, THERE'S NOTHING LEFT, NO CARROT YOU CAN DANGLE THAT MAKES LIFE ANY BETTER OR THE THREAT OF DEATH ANY WORSE.
HELL, I'D LOVE NOTHIN' MORE THAN THE CHANCE TO CLAW MY WAY UP TO THE HEAVENS AND SEE MY FAMILY AGAIN.
BUT I'M NOT GONNA GET THE CHANCE. BECAUSE OF YOU IDIOTS.
THE WORST MURDERERS IN THE WORLD, AND YOU GATHERED IN ONE PLACE?
I'M NOT THE BAIT HERE. **YOU** ARE...

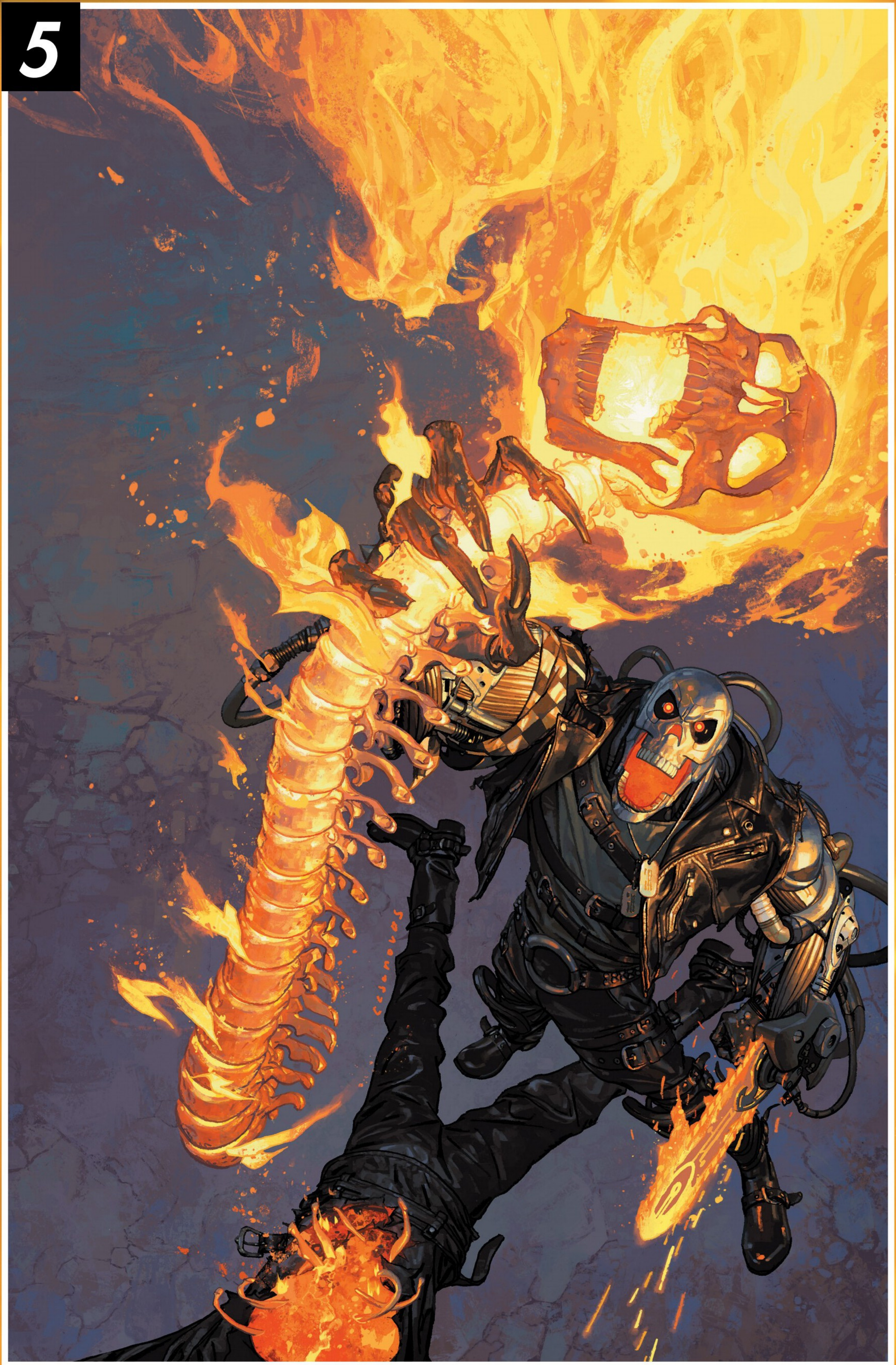
"...AND YOU'RE OUT OF *TIME.*
"I ALWAYS KNEW VENGEANCE WASN'T GOING TO MAKE IT TO ME...
SKREEET
"...BUT HE WASN'T THE *ONLY ONE* LOOKING."
CRUNCH

WHO THE HELL ARE *THESE* CLOWNS?
I'VE HEARD OF THEM. THEY CALL THEMSELVES *DEATH ROW.*
THEY'RE KILLERS OF THE WORST KIND. BE CAREFUL NOT TO UNDERESTIMATE THEM.
WELL, LOOK AT THIS. *HEHEHE.*
DR. KUMAR, I'M *BLUSHING* AT HOW WELL YOUR PLAN WORKED.
YOU WANTED TO CATCH A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE? YOU GOT *TWO* OF 'EM.
THEY ARE NOT THE RIGHT ONES.
BUT I'LL GLADLY TAKE THEM NONETHELESS.
DANNY, I CAN'T SENSE ANYTHING FROM THE ONE WITH THE GLASSES.
NEITHER CAN I, BLAZE. IT'S LIKE HE HAS *NO SOUL* AT ALL.
I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW *WHY.*

I'M ON IT.
KLANG
FLAMING CHAINS, HUH?
SHIIIK
WE'VE GOT THOSE TOO.
AND MORE.
SORRY TO SAY, THAT WON'T BE ENOUGH TO SAVE YOU AFTER WHAT YOU'VE DONE...

HANDS OFF MY HOST.

5



MICHAEL BADILINO'S PAINFUL REUNION.
BEAUTIFUL. JUST BEAUTIFUL.
VENGEANCE, A SPIRIT SEPARATED FROM ITS HOST.
THE GENIE HAS COME OUT OF ITS BOTTLE.
TIME TO MAKE A WISH.

BLAZE, KETCH. I WILL HANDLE THE SOULLESS ONE.
FINE BY US. WE'LL TAKE THE MASS MURDERERS.
VENGEANCE. I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS. LIKE HOW YOU MANAGED TO GET SEPARATED FROM *YOUR HOST* AND HOW, IN YOUR WEAKENED STATE, YOU MADE IT ALL THE WAY UP TO THE MOUNTAINS.
THE CARETAKER *SARA* TRANSPORTED ME HERE.
AS FOR OUR SEPARATION, SOMEONE UNKNOWN ATTEMPTED TO DRAG ME BACK TO *HELL.* I RESISTED...AND WAS *SEPARATED* FROM MICHAEL IN THE PROCESS.
SOUNDS *PAINFUL.*
IT WAS NOT ALL BAD. I HAVE PICKED UP A FEW THINGS ALONG THE WAY. LIKE KOWALSKI'S HEAD.
AND THIS *SHOTGUN.*
BOOM
FASCINATING. THAT'S NOT A NORMAL SHOTGUN.
AND I AM NOT A NORMAL MAN.

MICHAEL NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION. I WILL TAKE HIM TO SAFETY.
VROOOOOM
GOING FOR A RIDE ON ICY TERRAIN? NOT VERY SMART OF YOU.
LOOK OU--
AAAH!
KTAK
KRRRRKK

JUST CURIOUS--WHY THE HELL WOULD YOU WANT TO PUT YOURSELVES DIRECTLY IN THE LINE OF FIRE OF A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE?
SOUNDS LIKE YOU ALL HAVE A *DEATH WISH.*
OH, WE COULDN'T CARE LESS ABOUT *SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE.*
WE'RE JUST OUT TO MAKE A BUCK.
YOU WANNA KNOW WHY DR. KUMAR'S GOT HIS SIGHTS ON YOU? YOU CAN ASK HIM WHILE HE'S RIPPING YOU LIMB FROM LIMB.
MERCENARIES. I %&@%#$@ HATE MERCENARIES.
CLINK CLINK CLINK
WE'RE CALLED *DEATH ROW.* IF YOU WANT TO GET RID OF US, FEEL FREE TO MAKE A COUNTER-OFFER.

SLAM
SORRY TO DISAPPOINT, BUT I'M FLAT BROKE AND BAD AT NEGOTIATING.
HONESTLY...
SHUNK
...WE DIDN'T HAVE HIGH HOPES.
HEY! THAT ACTUALLY KINDA HURT.
I THINK YOU MAY HAVE CHIPPED BONE.
KA-RASH
IN THAT CASE...
...LET'S TRY AGAIN WITH SOMETHING **SHARPER**.

HYAA!
ENOUGH.
KRUNCH
I DID NOT COME HERE FOR *YOU*. BUT IF I HAVE TO FINISH YOU--
UGH!
KA-CHAK

FINISH HIM, BENTO. CHOP HIS HEAD OFF NOW WHILE I'VE GOT HIM.
HOLY %#$@, ASMAA, THAT WAS **AWESOME!**
I DIDN'T KNOW THAT WAS POSSIBLE. YOUR CHAINS ARE POWERFUL--I THINK THEY'RE STRONGER THAN **HIS.**
UH, YEAH. ABOUT THAT...
HAD TO LET MYSELF GET IMPALED TO TEST A **THEORY.**
IF THESE WEAPONS ARE POWERFUL ENOUGH TO IMPALE ME, THEY MUST BE **DAMNED** IN SOME WAY...WHICH MEANS THEY MIGHT RESPOND BETTER TO **MY** AUTHORITY...
ADD THAT TO MY OWN CHAINS, AND YOU JUST GAVE ME AN **UPGRADE.**
#$&%!!!

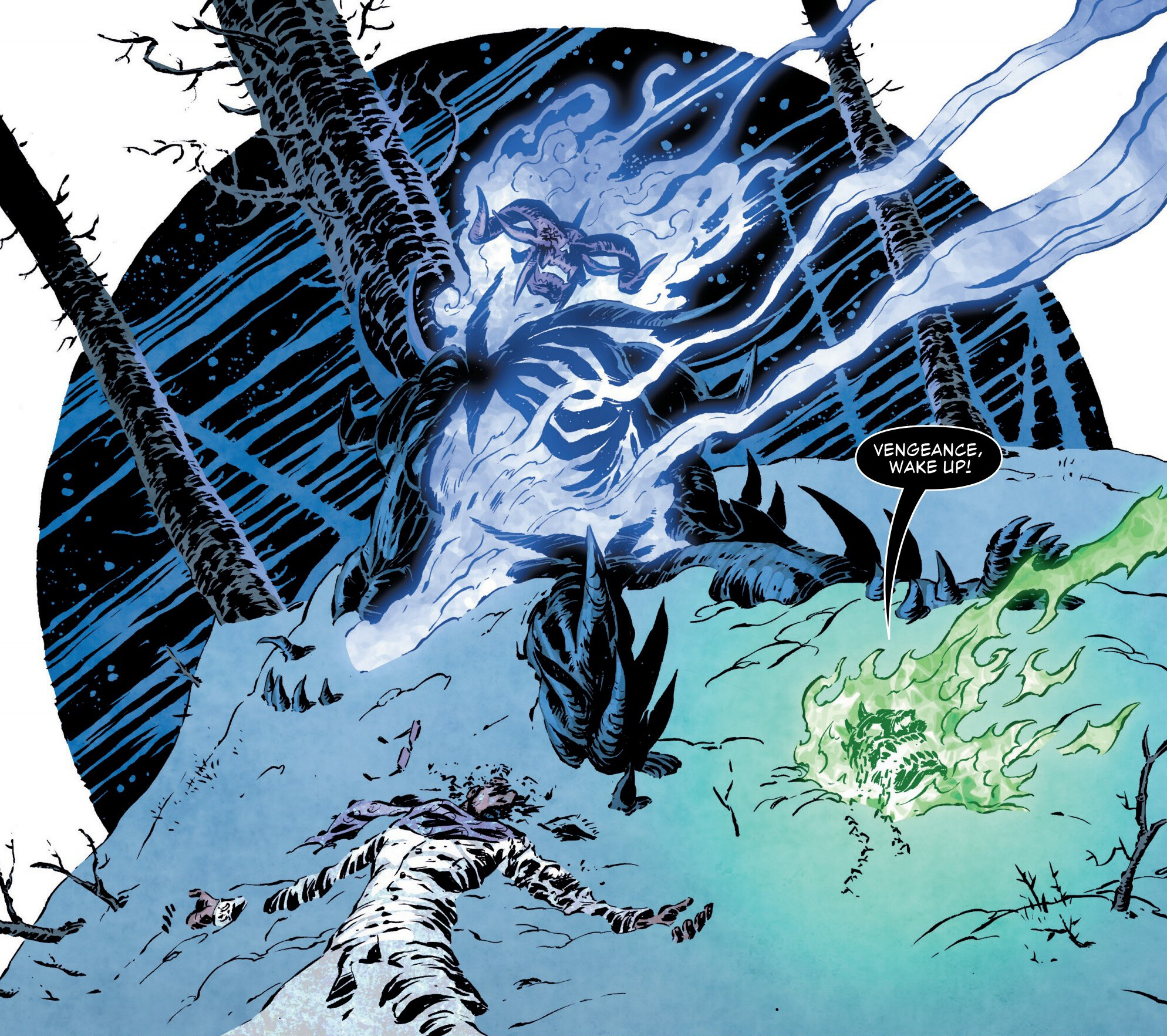
WHERE DID YOU GET DAMNED WEAPONS FROM, ANYWAY?
LINDA LITTLETREES. IN EXCHANGE, SHE MADE US PROMISE TO PROTECT HER WHEN THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE CAME CALLIN'.
BUT WE'RE NOT GOOD AT PROMISES, ARE WE? HEHEHE.
NOT THAT IT MATTERS. I DON'T NEED TO SEE YOUR HUMAN FORM TO KNOW YOU'RE NOT CUT OUT FOR THIS LIFE.
COULDA KILLED US THREE TIMES OVER BY NOW, BUT YOU **REFUSED** TO DO IT.
BECAUSE YOU TAKE NO PLEASURE IN KILLING.
I GOT A FEELING YOU FELL INTO THIS LIFE BY **ACCIDENT.** YOUR SPIRIT'S GOTTA BE AWARE THAT YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY THE IDEAL HOST TO ENACT VENGEANCE.
AND THAT, MY FRIEND, IS GOING TO BITE YOU IN THE ASS SOMEDAY.

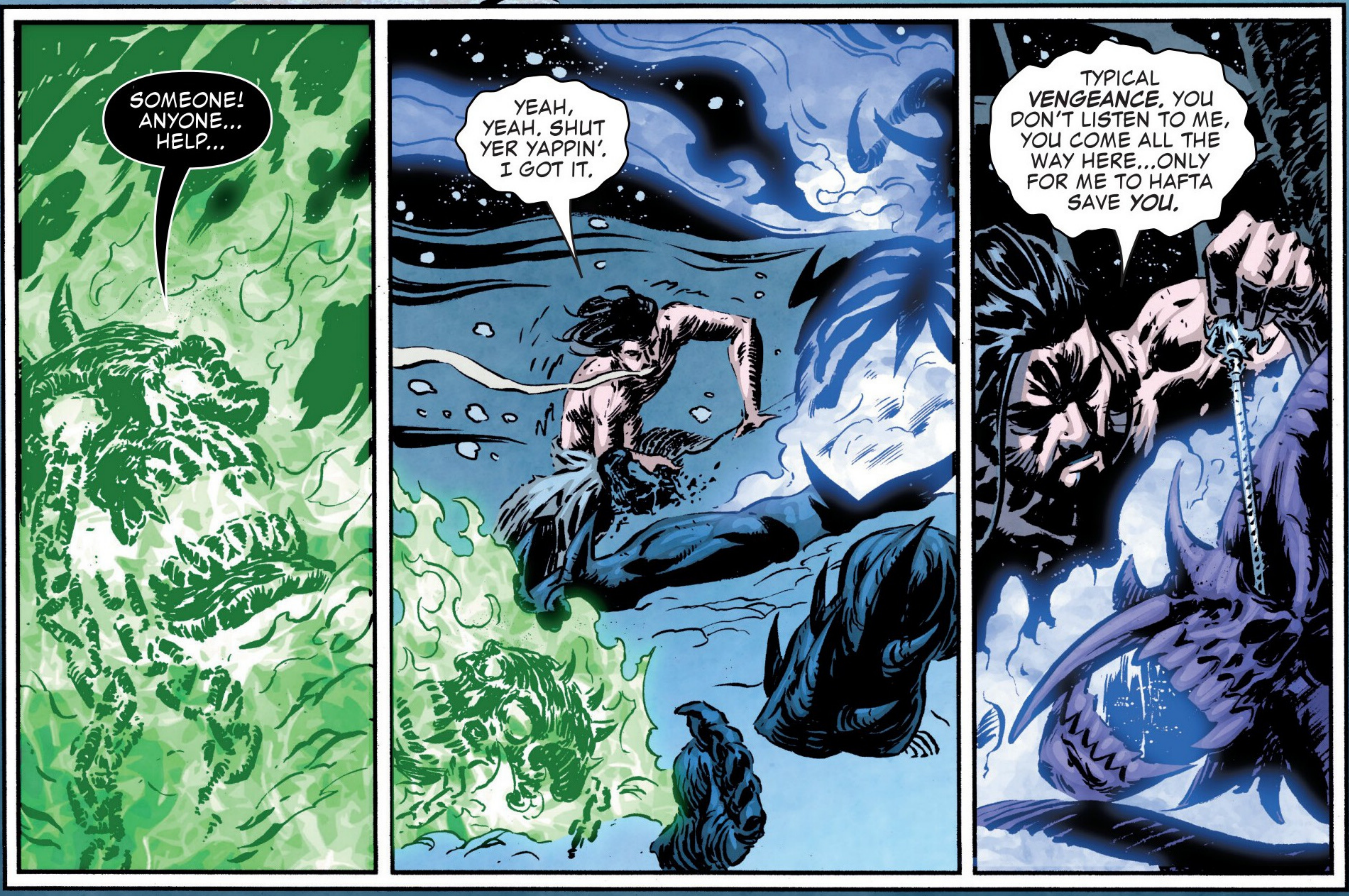
ELSEWHERE.
WHAT'S THE MATTER? SCARED OF A LITTLE ICE?
I'VE BEEN TO THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN AND BACK ALREADY. AIN'T NOTHIN' SPECIAL DOWN THERE.
KA-RACK
HERE, I'LL SHOW YOU.
"YOU HAVE GONE TO GREAT LENGTHS TO FACE ME..."

...YET I HAVE NO IDEA WHO YOU ARE.
YOU MAY CALL ME **DR. KUMAR.** I HAVE AN OFFER FOR YOU: ABANDON MICHAEL BADILINO AS YOUR HOST, AND I WILL SPARE HIS LIFE.
YOUR DESTINY LIES **AHEAD.** A SPIRIT SO POWERFUL DESERVES A HOST WHO ALLOWS IT TO MOVE UNFETTERED.
ABANDON MICHAEL? **NEVER.**
EITHER WAY, YOUR HOST IS NOT LONG FOR THIS WORLD.
UNNGH...

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, BUT I SUSPECT YOU'RE HIDING BEHIND THOSE GLASSES--
--BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LOOK A SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE IN THE EYES.
ACTUALLY...
...YOU'VE GOT IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND.
SCHLOOP
HUNH!
WHRRRRR
NYYYYARGH!!!
THIS WILL ONLY TAKE A MOMENT.

GHOSTWORKS LAB. LOCATION UNKNOWN.
SPIRIT CAPTURED. COPYING ESSENCE...
INSTALLING...
GHOSTWORKS INITIATED.
"VENGEANCE!"


VENGEANCE, WAKE UP!


SOMEONE! ANYONE... HELP...
YEAH, YEAH. SHUT YER YAPPIN'. I GOT IT.
TYPICAL *VENGEANCE.* YOU DON'T LISTEN TO ME, YOU COME ALL THE WAY HERE...ONLY FOR ME TO HAFTA SAVE *YOU.*

MICHAEL...
YOU HAVE SUFFERED SO *MUCH*, AND THOUGH YOU MAY HAVE BEEN DECEIVED INTO OUR INITIAL PARTNERSHIP...
...THOUGH I WAS SHAPED BY MEPHISTO HIMSELF AS NOTHING MORE THAN A *MOCKERY* OF BLAZE AND ZARATHOS...
...WE ARE *MORE*.

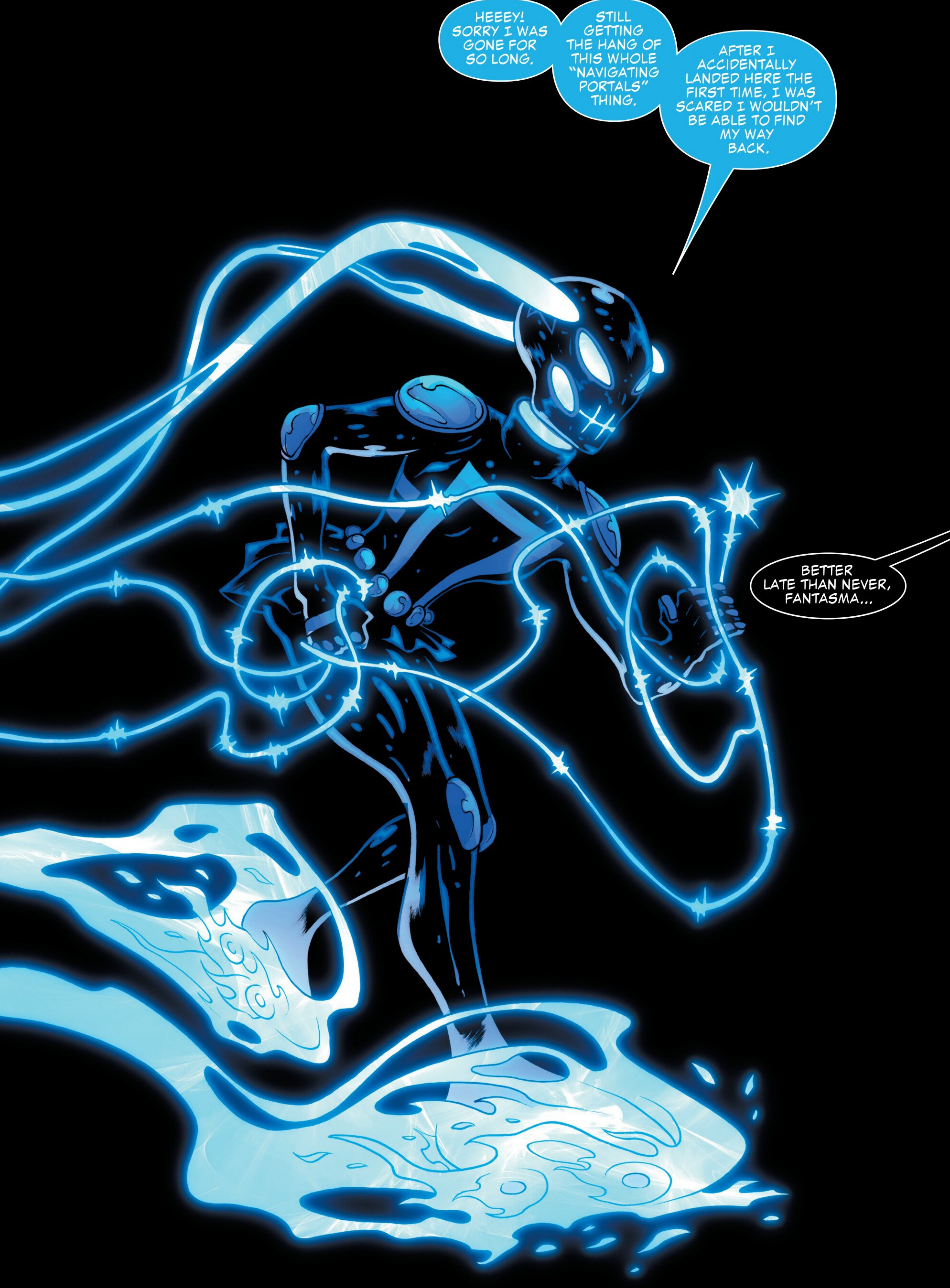
SO LET ME CARRY YOUR ANGUISH. LET US BE REUNITED ONCE MORE...
LET US TAKE THE NEXT STEP...
ARRRGGH!
HUUNGH--
...TOGETHER.

AS FOR YOU, **KOWALSKI**...
HEY, COME ON...
I THINK I PROVED MYSELF USEFUL, DIDN'T I? I GOT YOU HERE. AS PROMISED.
AND I **LET** YOU LIVE UNTIL NOW. AS PROMISED. BUT YOU HAVE HURT AND KILLED **TOO MANY** PEOPLE.
NO MORE. YOUR CORRUPTED FLAMES SHALL BE THE SPARK OF IGNITION FOR THE **REBIRTH**...
B'KASH

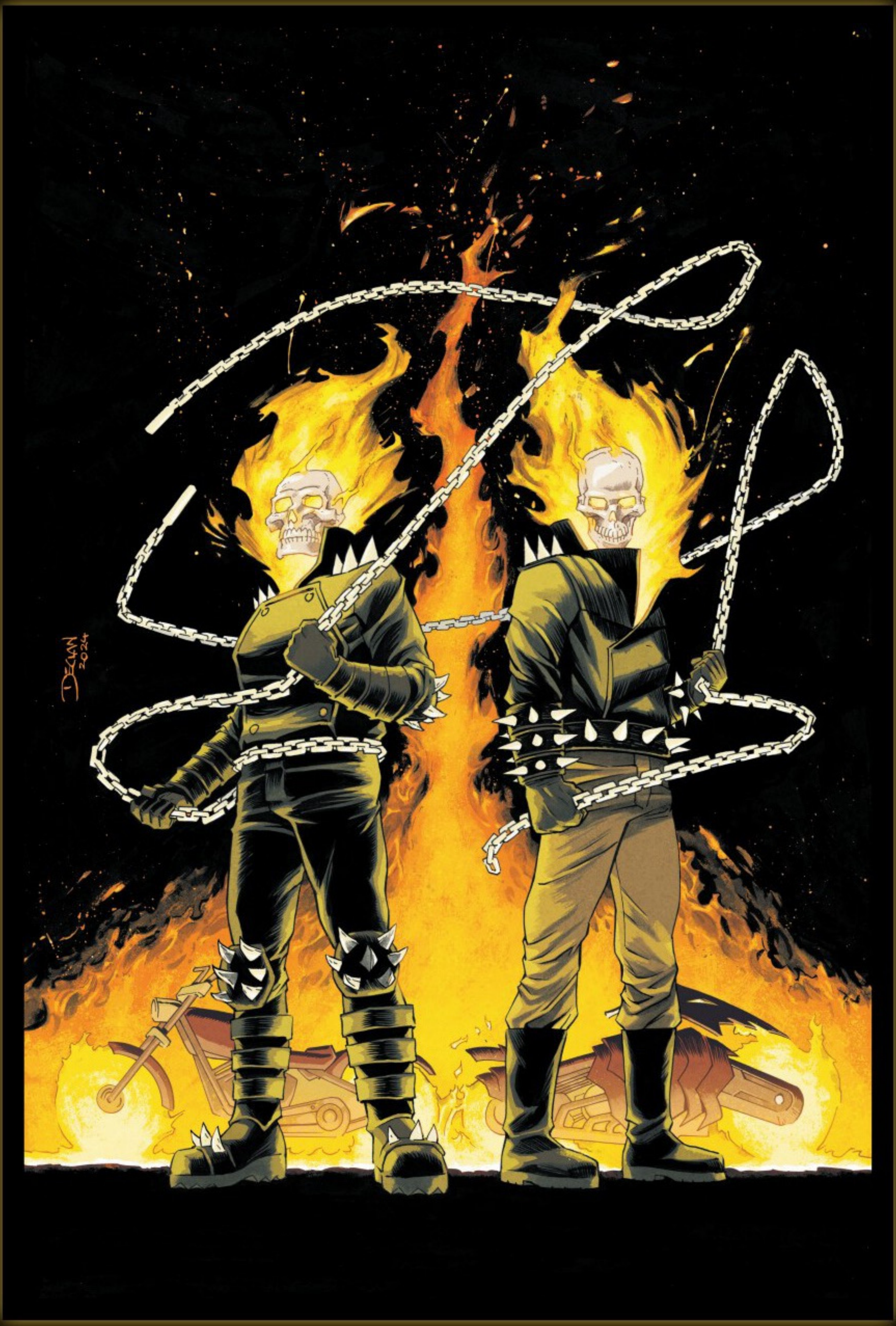
...OF VENGEANCE!

ABOUT DAMN TIME.
SO, THIS GUY WAS A *ROBOT?* WHAT WAS ALL THIS ABOUT?
BOOM
WHATEVER IT IS, I HAVE A FEELING IT IS ***NOT*** OVER YET.
WE HAVE A BIGGER PROBLEM. WE CAME HERE TO WARN YOU, VENGEANCE. THE ***SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE*** HAS SET ITS SIGHTS ON YOU, ON ALL OF US.
ABOUT THAT...
LINDA LITTLETREES MIGHT BE ABLE TO HELP US.
ASSUMING THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE HASN'T ***KILLED*** HER YET.

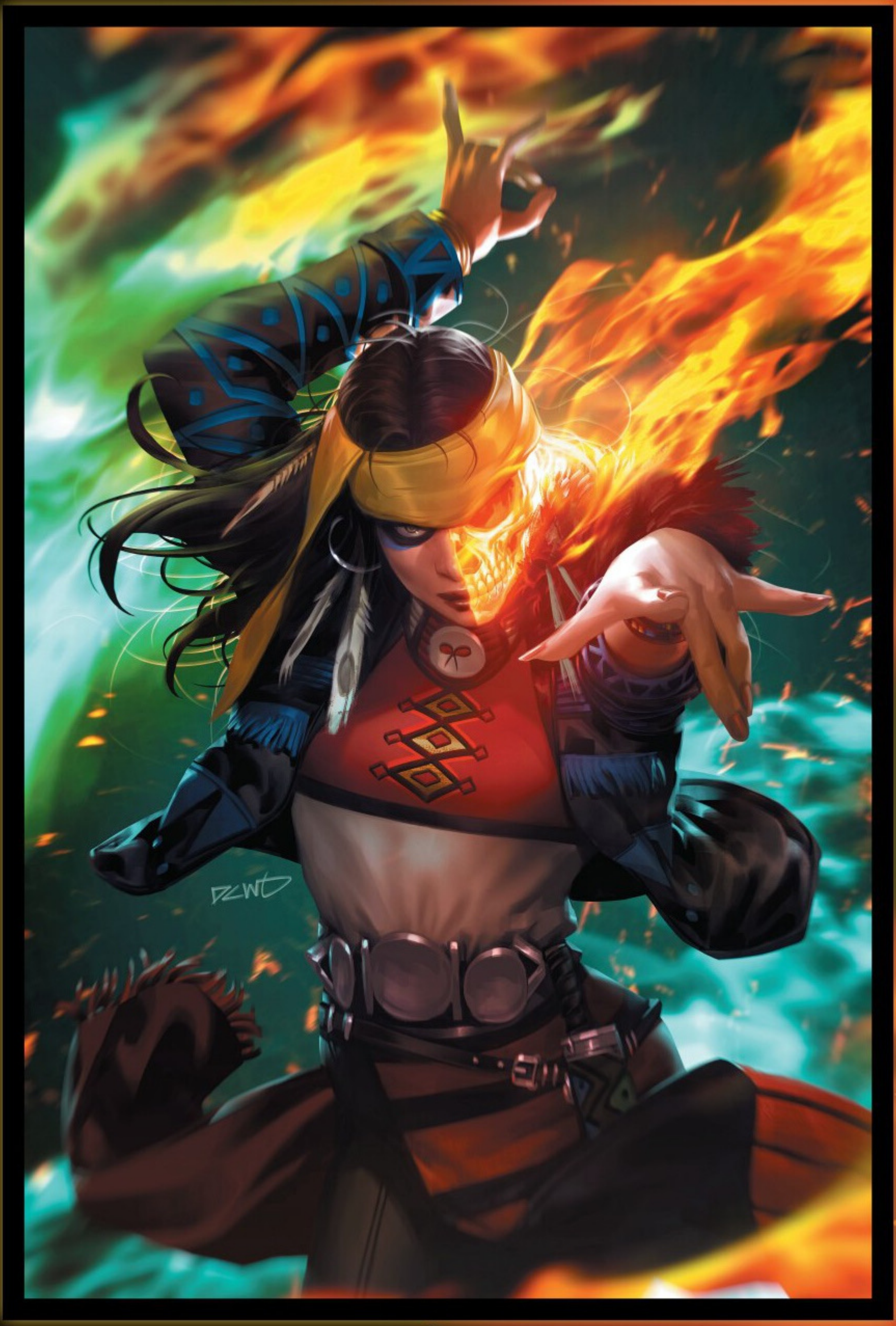
THE GOD QUARRY.


HEEEY! SORRY I WAS GONE FOR SO LONG.
STILL GETTING THE HANG OF THIS WHOLE "NAVIGATING PORTALS" THING.
AFTER I ACCIDENTALLY LANDED HERE THE FIRST TIME, I WAS SCARED I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO FIND MY WAY BACK.
BETTER LATE THAN NEVER, FANTASMA...

...THERE'S WORK TO DO HERE.


DECLAN 2024

DECLAN SHALVEY
#1 VARIANT



DERRICK CHEW
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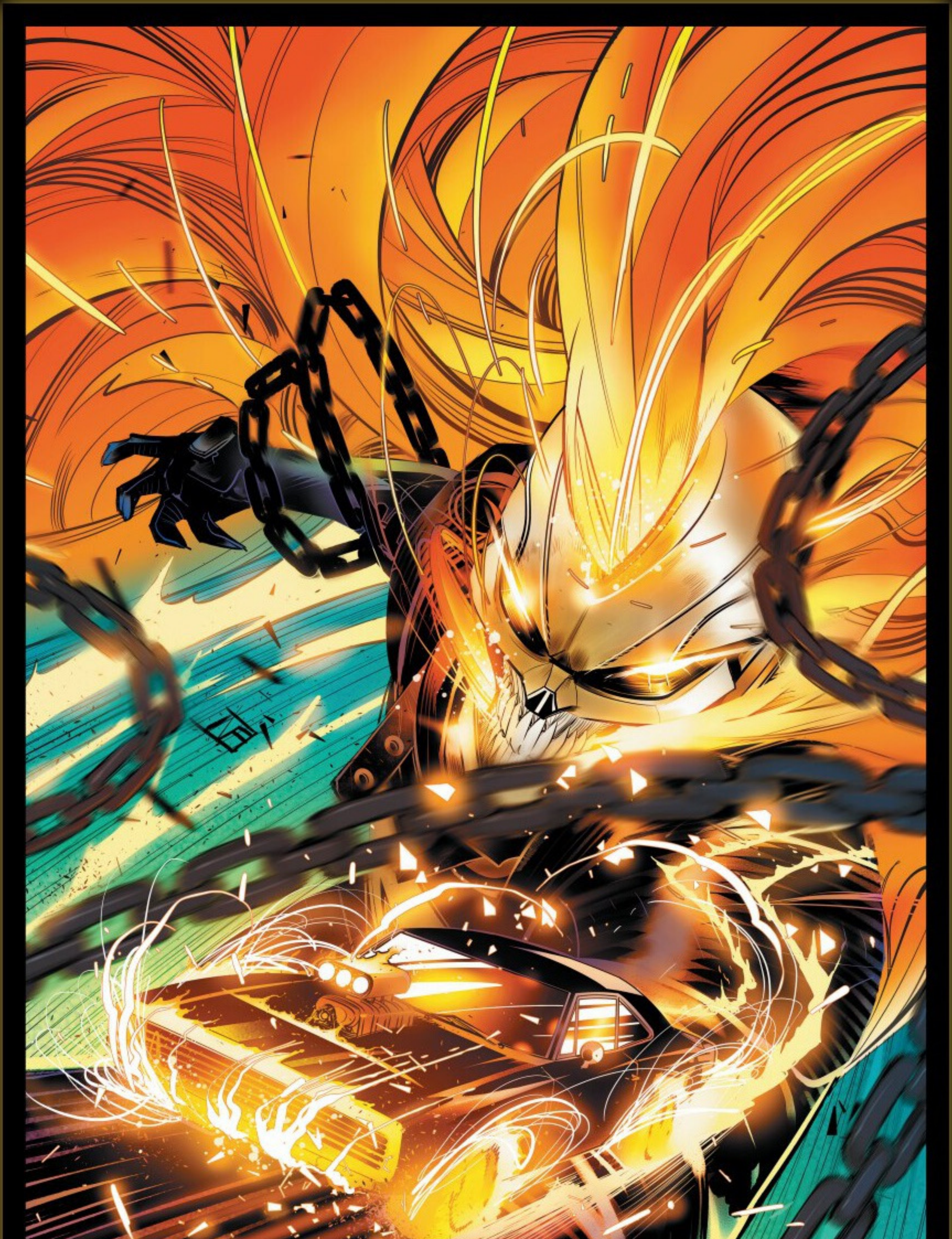
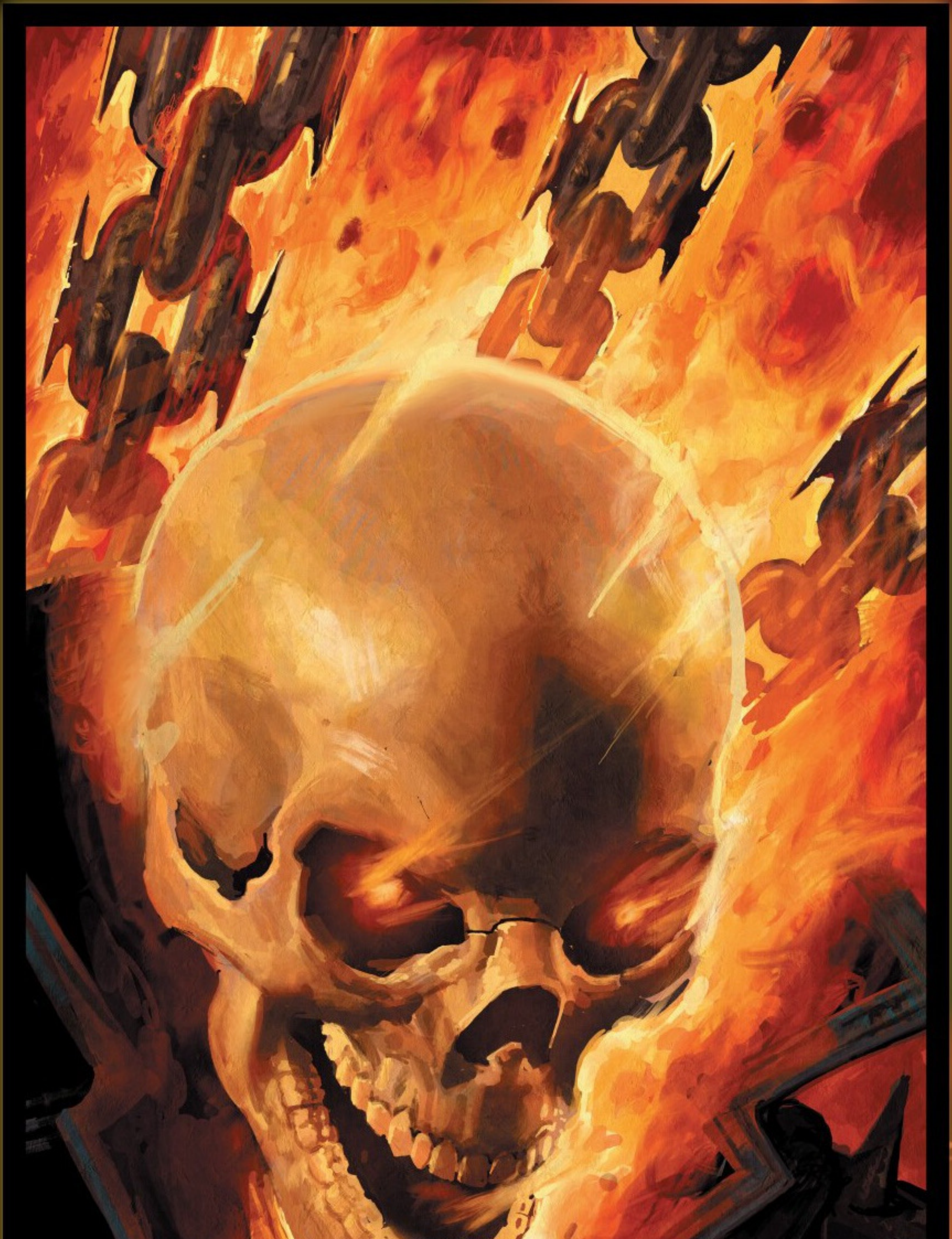
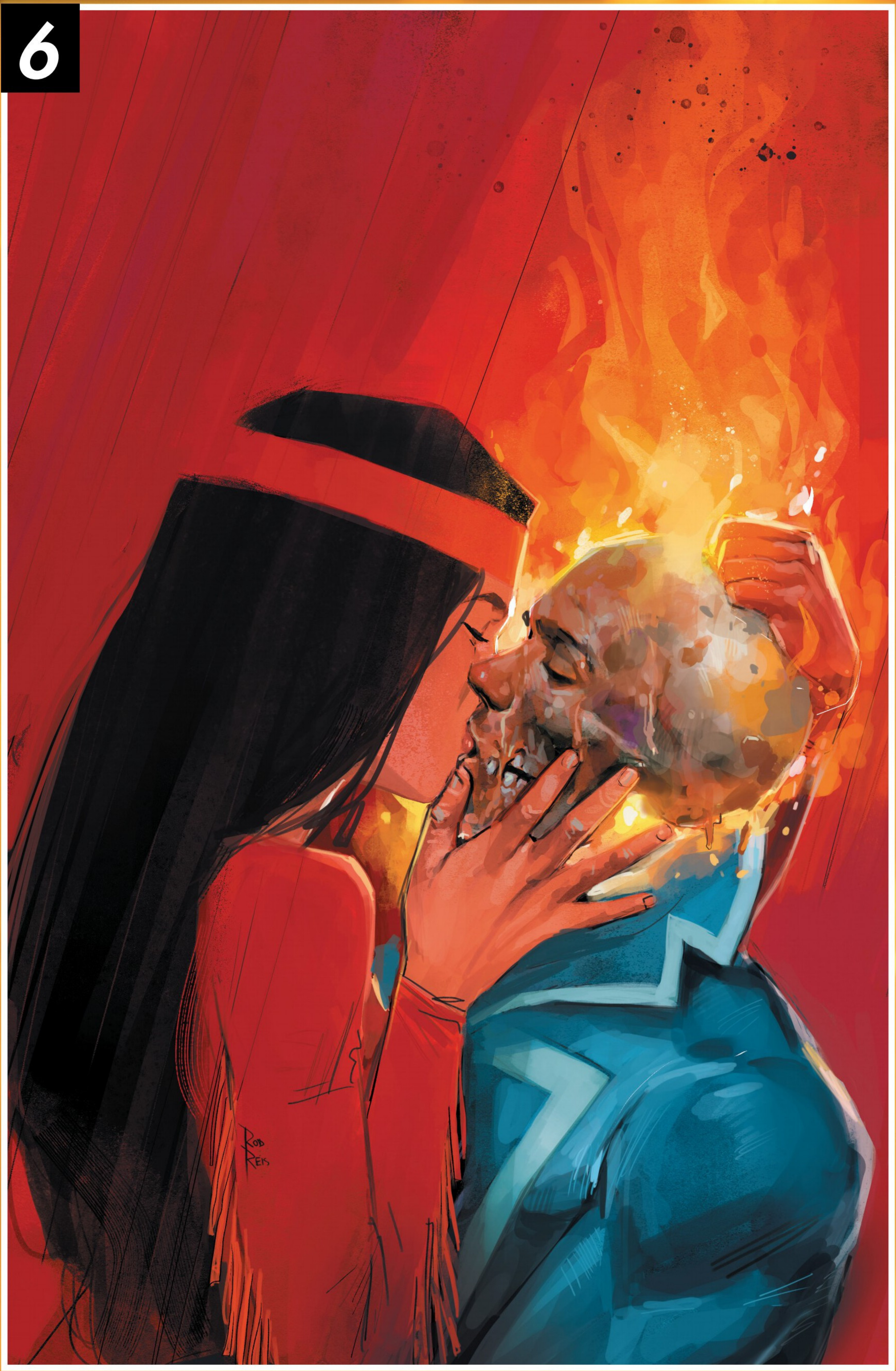


FEDERICO VICENTINI & MATT MILLA
#1 STORMBREAKERS VARIANT



E.M. GIST
#1 VARIANT

6



THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE HUNTS THEM ALL.
POOR LINDA LITTLETREES IS THE FIRST TO FALL.
IT IS HER KNOWLEDGE, YOU SEE, THAT CONDEMNED HER TO BE THE FIRST IN THIS VIOLENT KILLING SPREE.
SHE TAKES HER LAST BREATH, STARING DOWN THE FACE OF DEATH...
...BUT IF THE CARETAKER'S WORDS ARE TRUE, THEN THE SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE MAY YET FIND HOPE ANEW.
FOR EVEN AS LINDA, THE WITCH WOMAN, FADES AWAY...
...THERE IS ONE WITNESS WHO KNOWS HOW TO GRANT THESE EXECUTIONS A STAY...
...AND THEY GO BY LOKI.
WHO, ME?
LOOK, MR. VENGEANCE, I'M SURE THERE'S A REASONABLE SOLUTION TO OUR SITUATION.
YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE, AND I WOULD PREFER NOT TO TELL YOU ANYTHING AT ALL SO AS TO AVOID ANY INVOLVEMENT WITH SAID SPIRIT.

MICHAEL BADILINO'S IMPOSSIBLE TASK
THE ONLY SENSIBLE THING TO DO IS TO GO OUR *SEPARATE* WAYS--
--AND LEAVE YOU TO YOUR TRAGIC FATE IF AND WHEN THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE CROSSES YOUR PATH.
LOKI. STOP. YOU ARE IN *DANGER*. THE CARETAKER TOLD US YOU KNOW HOW TO STOP THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE.
YOUR BEST CHANCE OF SURVIVAL IS TO LET US *PROTECT* YOU BY TELLING US WHAT YOU KNOW.
I THINK NOT.
I ABSORBED KOWALSKI'S FLAMES OF *CORRUPTION*, WHICH ALLOW ME TO CUT THROUGH YOUR ILLUSIONS.
EITHER YOU HAVE BEEN HIT IN THE HEAD WITH A HAMMER ONE TIME TOO MANY AND YOU CANNOT RECOGNIZE WHEN SOMEONE IS TRYING TO *HELP* YOU--
--OR THERE IS A *REASON* YOU ARE BEING SO OBSTINATE.
UNH!
SEEKING TO UNDERSTAND THE MIND OF A *GOD?* THAT'S BOLD OF YOU.

KRA-KOOM
URK--
WHAT COULD YOU HOPE TO UNDERSTAND OF THE FORCES THAT USE YOUR LIFE AS A PIECE OF AMUSEMENT?
NOTHING, ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. CONSIDERING YOU'RE JUST A MAN.
AS FOR YOU... ZALA...
...WELCOME BACK TO YOUR BIRTHPLACE.
THIS IS WHERE MEPHISTO CONJURED YOU. HERE, IN THE PIT OF THE DESPAIR. THIS LITTLE PIECE OF HELL ON EARTH. IT'S AN EASY PLACE TO UNMAKE YOU.
YOU CAN'T SEE IT FROM YOUR LITTLE MOTORCYCLE, BUT YOU'RE ALL RUNNING IN PREORDAINED CIRCLES. EVEN THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE.
IT KILLS AS IT WAS DESIGNED TO, BOUND BY ITS CURSE, SAME AS YOURS.
ACK-- WHAT CURSE?
BLAZE DIDN'T TELL YOU? INTERESTING.
SOUNDS LIKE I'M NOT THE ONLY NAUGHTY ONE AROUND HERE.

URK--YOU ACT LIKE YOU HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE. BUT YOU'RE AFRAID OF THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE. BECAUSE YOU KNOW IT TARGETS THOSE WE LOVE.
I THINK THERE IS SOMEONE OUT THERE YOU LOVE, EVEN IF YOU PRETEND NOT TO.
A SIBLING, PERHAPS.
AS FOR ZALA? HE'S NOT JUST A DREAM OF MEPHISTO'S...

...HE'S MY *REALITY.*
AND NOW THAT WE HAVE COMMITTED TO OUR BOND--
--*NOTHING* CAN KEEP US APART.
NOT YOUR ARMIES, NOT YOUR THUNDER-- AND NOW YOU WILL TESTIFY TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE, LOKI.

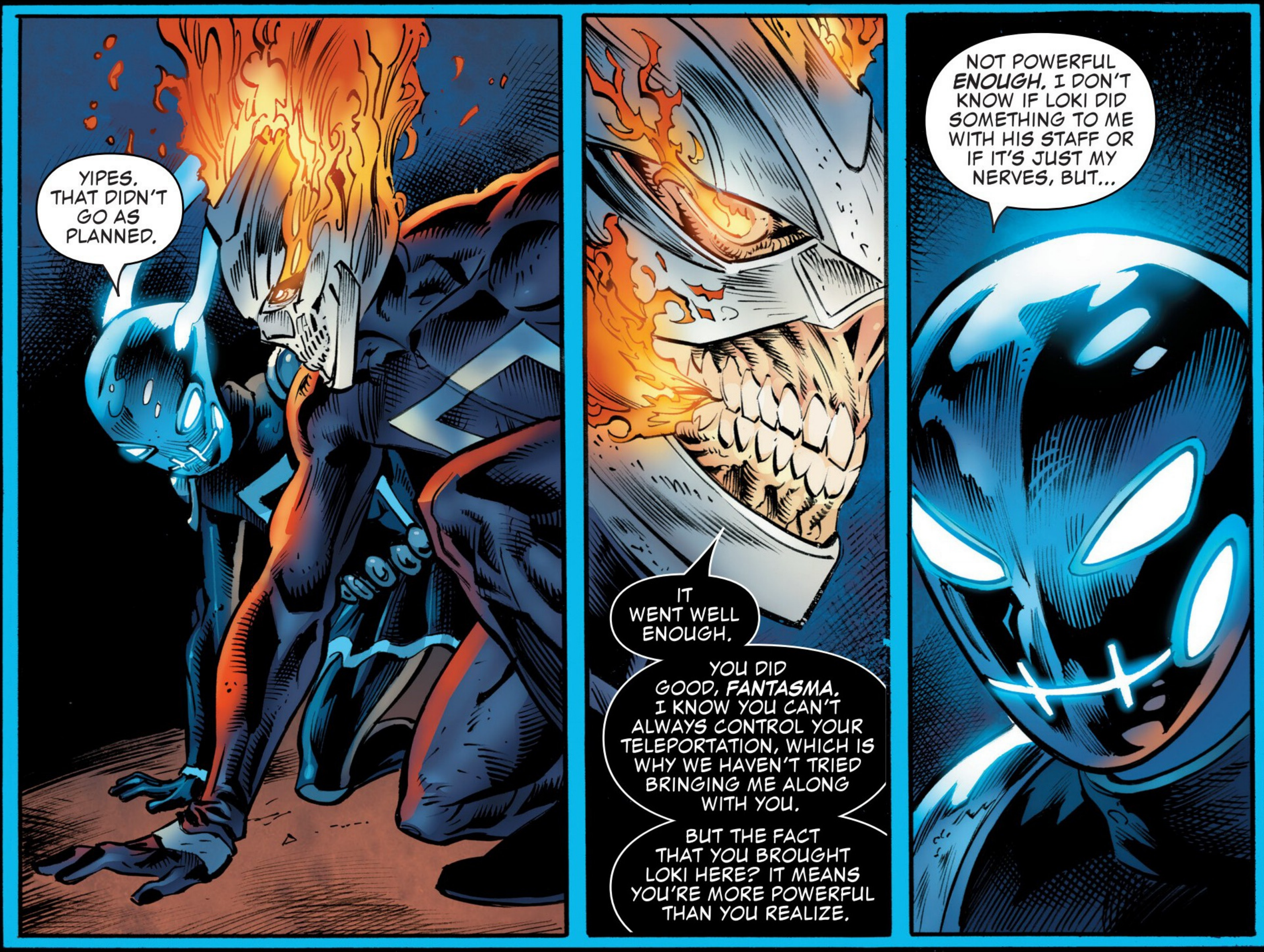
FOR EVEN GODS MUST ANSWER FOR THEIR SINS.
K'TING K'TING
NOT TO AN AFTERTHOUGHT LIKE--
--YOUUUUUU--
WHAT THE HELL...?

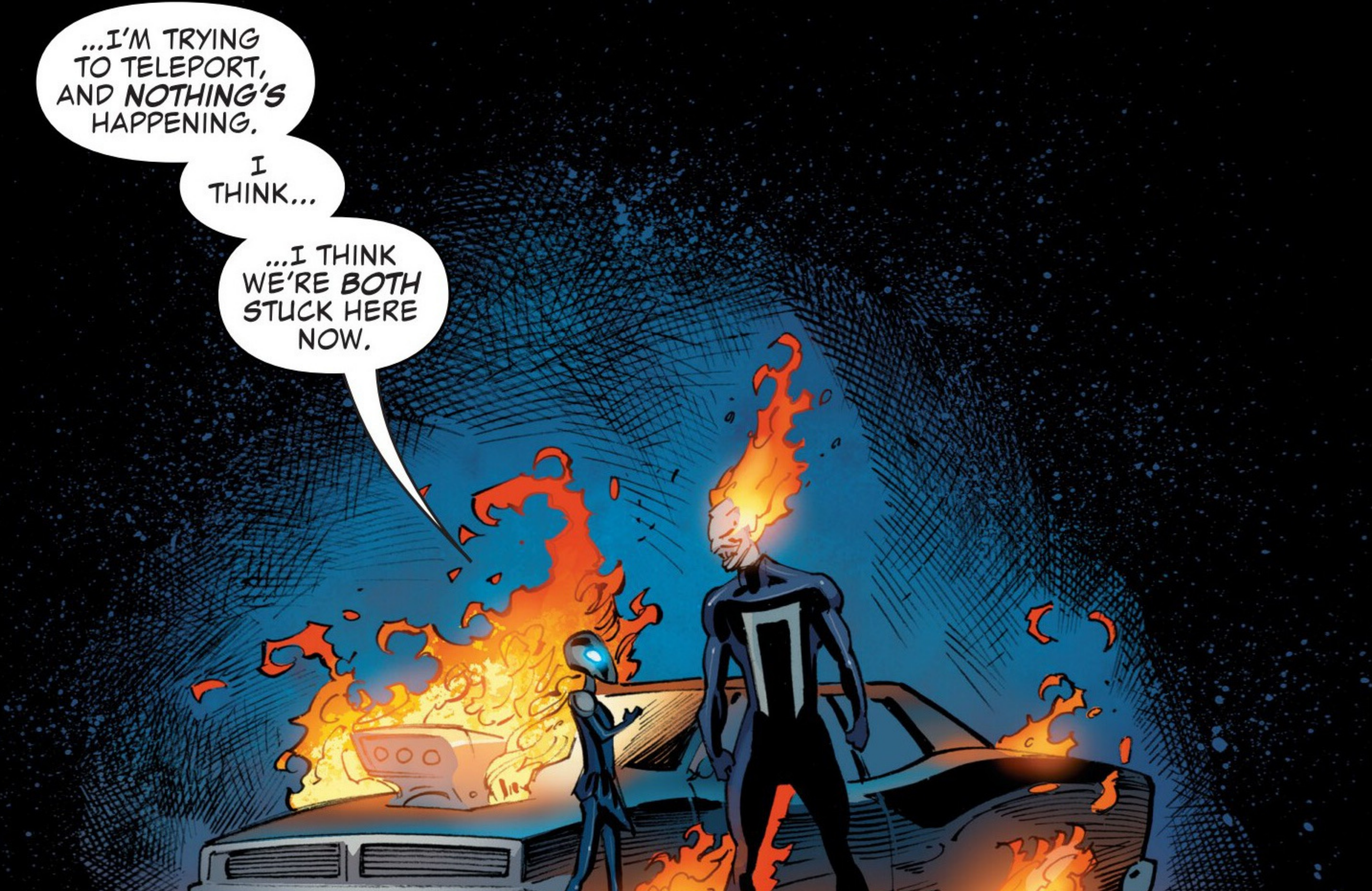
OOF.
I'VE TUMBLED THROUGH ENDLESS REALMS BEFORE, BUT THIS WAS CERTAINLY THE WORST RIDE OF THEM ALL.
THIS PLACE COULD USE A LITTLE--
CHOOM
...LIGHT...
OH, LOOK. THERE'S ANOTHER ONE. WAY OUT HERE.
I'M SORRY. WHICH GHOST RIDER ARE YOU?

MY NAME IS *ROBBIE REYES*...
...I'VE BEEN STRANDED HERE, *ALONE*, AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF ALL THINGS...
...IN NO SMALL PART BECAUSE OF *YOU*.
WHICH "ME" WAS THAT?
URK-- DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. WHEN YOU GET TO MY AGE, MEMORY IS NOT AS RELIABLE--

VENGEANCE WAS NEVER GOING TO BREAK YOU.
VRROOOOOM
BUT YOU'RE IN THE *GOD QUARRY* NOW. WHICH MEANS YOU HAVE TO DEAL WITH *ME*.
CRASH
AAAAAH!
YOU'VE GOT JUST *ONE* CHANCE TO BE RELEASED FROM THE GOD QUARRY, OR BE STUCK HERE WITH ME FOR AN ETERNITY.
I KNOW YOU'RE AWARE OF JUST HOW LONG THAT IS.
FEH!

TELL US HOW TO STOP THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE.
THIS HERE'S A TEACHABLE MOMENT FOR YOU--
--AND YOUR LITTLE FRIEND WHO BROUGHT ME HERE.
EEP!
YOU CANNOT CAPTURE A GOD!
YOU CANNOT INTIMIDATE A GOD. YOU CANNOT COERCE A GOD. YOU CAN ONLY PRAY.
BUT BECAUSE I AM A MERCIFUL GOD, AND MAYBE, JUST MAYBE, THAT ANNOYING COP HAD A POINT EARLIER...
...I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU TWO WORDS THAT WILL MAKE THIS WHOLE GAME WITH THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE A LOT MORE INTERESTING.
"BLIGHT BLADE."
TA-TA.


YIPES. THAT DIDN'T GO AS PLANNED.
IT WENT WELL ENOUGH.
YOU DID GOOD, *FANTASMA.* I KNOW YOU CAN'T ALWAYS CONTROL YOUR TELEPORTATION, WHICH IS WHY WE HAVEN'T TRIED BRINGING ME ALONG WITH YOU.
BUT THE FACT THAT YOU BROUGHT LOKI HERE? IT MEANS YOU'RE MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU REALIZE.
NOT POWERFUL ***ENOUGH.*** I DON'T KNOW IF LOKI DID SOMETHING TO ME WITH HIS STAFF OR IF IT'S JUST MY NERVES, BUT...


...I'M TRYING TO TELEPORT, AND ***NOTHING'S*** HAPPENING.
I THINK...
...I THINK WE'RE ***BOTH*** STUCK HERE NOW.

JOHNNY BLAZE'S LOST LOVE
SOMETIMES I'D WONDER, JOHNNY. IF YOU'D MET ME *BEFORE* YOU MET ROXANNE... MAYBE WE COULD HAVE HAD A LIFE TOGETHER.
I THINK WE WERE THE *BETTER* PAIR. MORE WELL SUITED. BOTH ACQUAINTED WITH HELLFIRE AND HEARTBREAK.
LINDA--
OH, LOOK AT ME. BABBLING ON ABOUT HYPOTHETICALS AT THE END OF MY LIFE. IT'S REALLY A PATHETIC LOOK, ISN'T IT?
I'M *SORRY,* JOHNNY.
IT'S OKAY. I'VE WONDERED ABOUT THAT TOO.
SWEET OF YOU TO SAY, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE YOU.
NO, I CAN HEAR IT IN YOUR VOICE. SOMETHING'S *CHANGED* IN YOU, JOHNNY.
CARE TO SHARE A SECRET WITH A DYING WOMAN?

THERE'S NOTHING TO TELL. YOU KNOW BETTER THAN ANYONE WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU BARGAIN WITH THE FORCES OF HELL.
AH. SO YOU FINALLY LEARNED THE WHOLE TRUTH.
IT'S SO UNFAIR.
MY BEAUTIFUL JOHNNY. DON'T FACE THAT WORLD. JUST STAY HERE WITH ME. WHERE ONE MOMENT LASTS A LIFETIME...
...HERE INSIDE THE PENANCE STARE.
I WASN'T SURE THIS WOULD WORK.
I WAS AFRAID THAT IN PROLONGING YOUR LIFE ENOUGH TO TALK TO YOU, I'D CONDEMN YOU TO UNIMAGINABLE PAIN AND SUFFERING IN A SINGLE STRETCHED MOMENT.
OH, THAT'S STILL COMING. I KNOW WHAT I SIGNED UP FOR HERE.
BUT I CAN DELAY IT JUST A LITTLE BIT BY HIDING FROM THE PENANCE STARE IN MY OWN LITTLE CORNER OF INNOCENCE. I'VE GOT MY TRICKS, YOU KNOW.

BUT I'M *TIRED* NOW. THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE MADE SURE I WOULDN'T SURVIVE, NO MATTER WHAT I DID.
I'M SORRY I COULDN'T REACH YOU IN TIME.
WHO'S THE *HOST,* LINDA? TELL ME. IF I'M GOING TO HAVE A FIGHTING CHANCE, I NEED TO KNOW WHO IT CHOSE AS ITS CHAMPION.
OF COURSE, JOHNNY. I'LL TELL YOU ANYTHING. MY LAST BREATH BELONGS TO YOU.
BUT COULD YOU JUST...HOLD ME A LITTLE WHILE LONGER?

DO ME A FAVOR, JOHNNY.
DON'T BURY ME.
IT'S BETTER IF NO ONE SEES ME IN THE SHAPE I'M IN. JUST... JUST *BURN* IT, OKAY?
OH, LINDA.
IT'S OKAY. SOME PEOPLE ARE JUST *UNLUCKY.* BUT NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE WITH ME, EVEN IF IT'S ONLY FOR ONE SECOND...
...I FEEL PRETTY LUCKY.

I'M SORRY, JOHNNY. SHE DIDN'T DESERVE THIS.
DANNY. THERE'S SOMETHING I HAVE TO TELL YOU...

IT'S YOUR *SISTER*, DANNY. *BARBARA KETCH* IS THE HOST FOR THE SPIRIT OF VIOLENCE.

TO BE CONTINUED IN SPIRITS OF VIOLENCE!

JUSTIN MASON & FEDERICO BLEE
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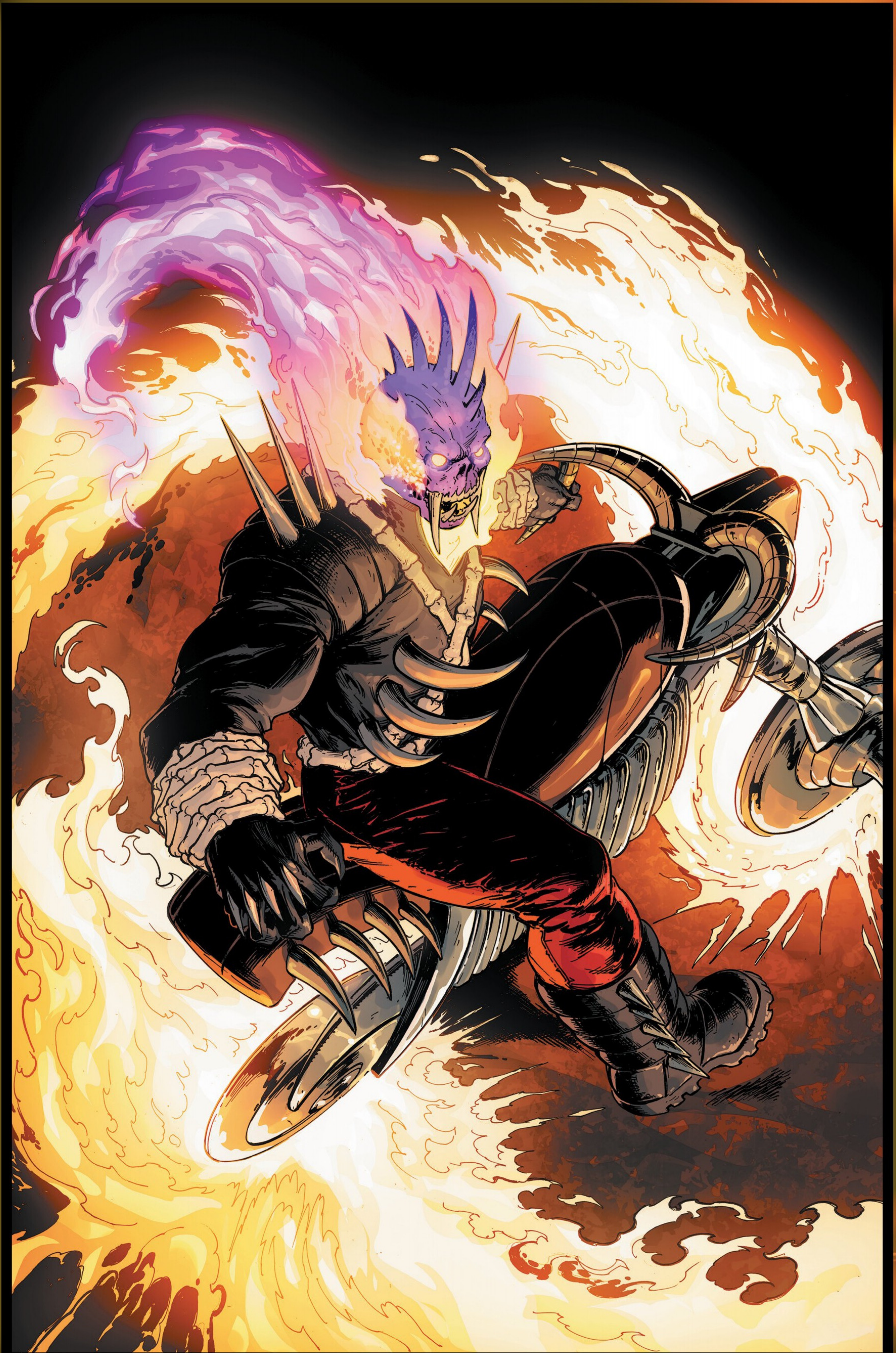

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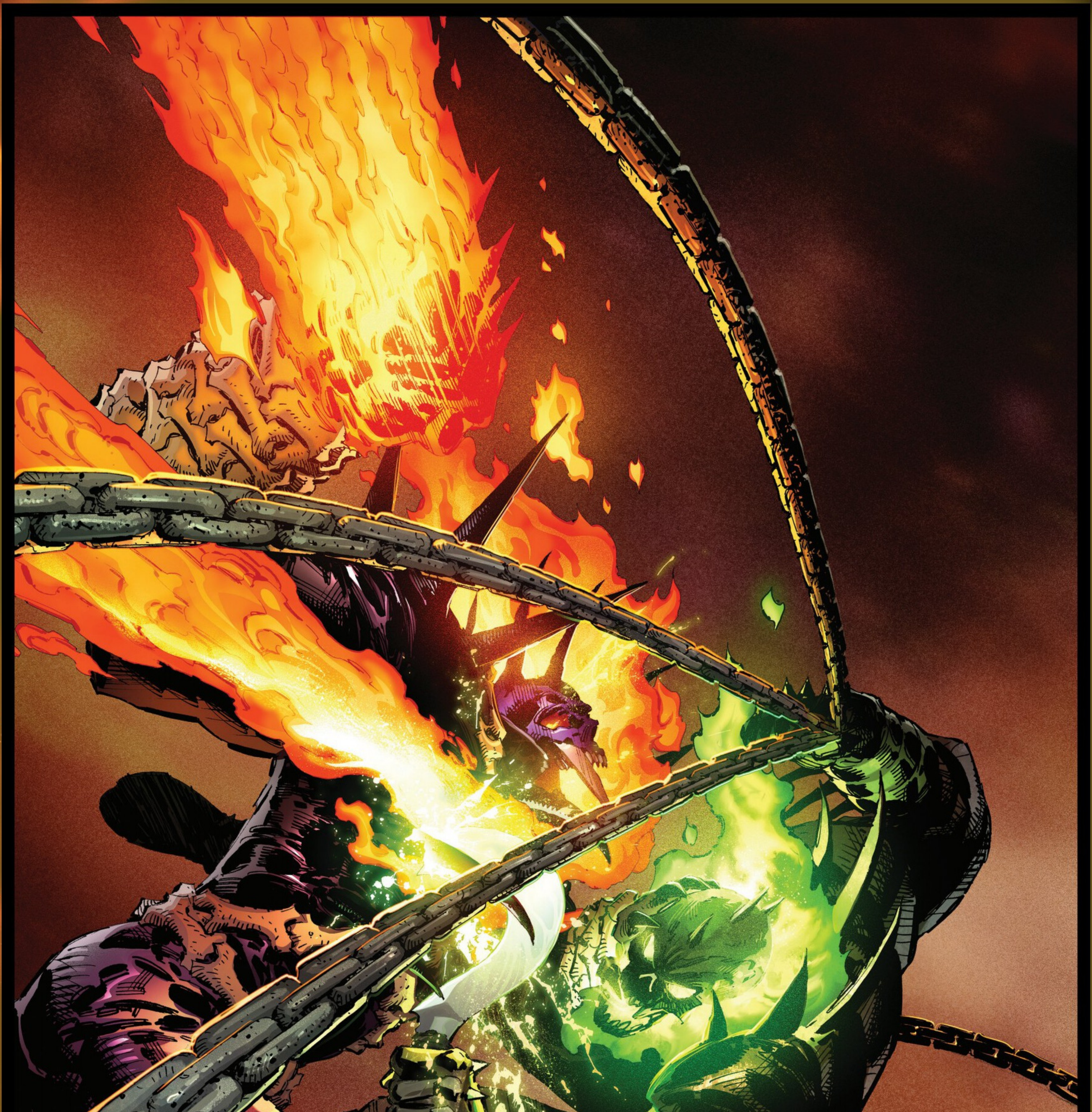

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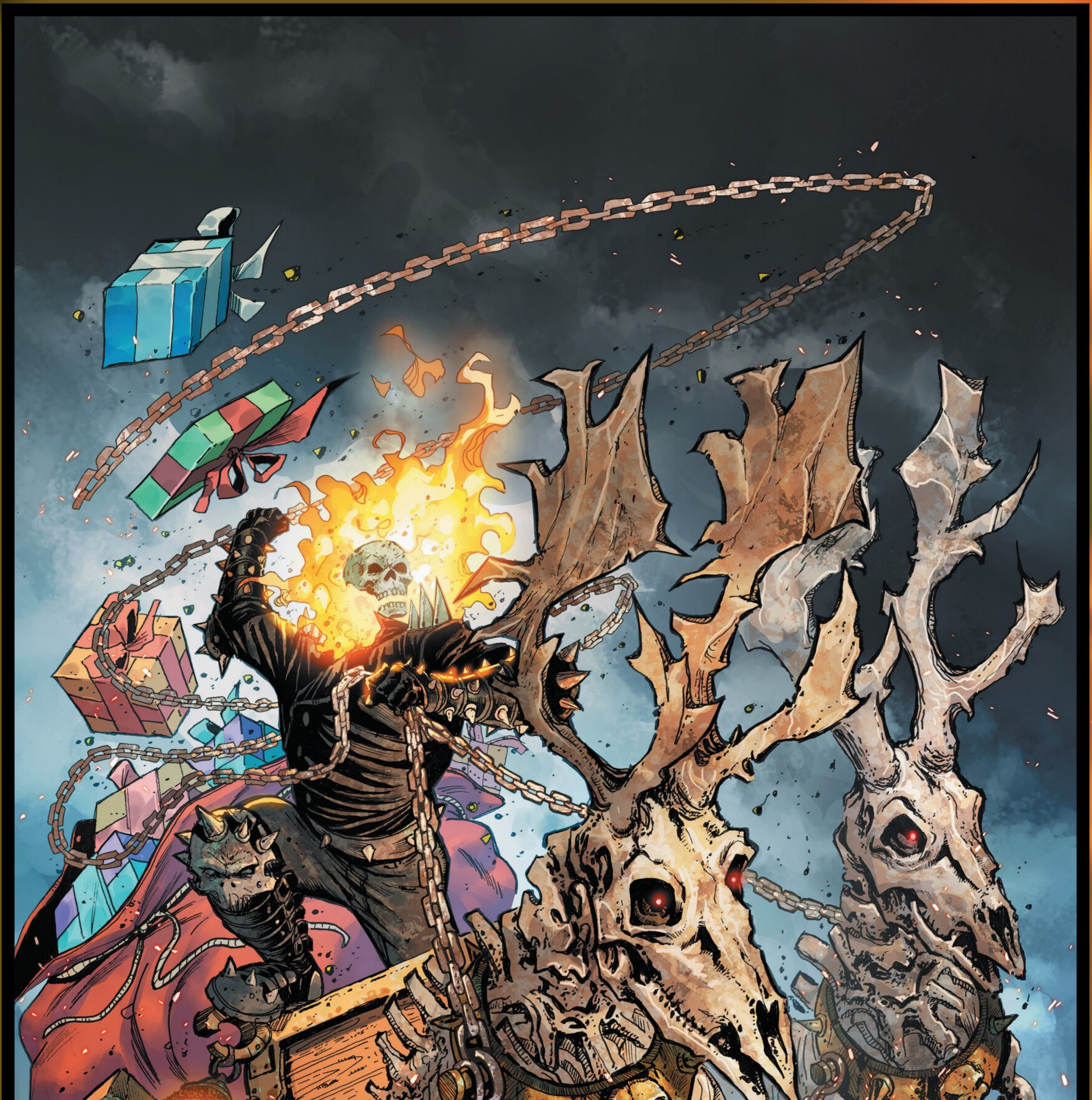
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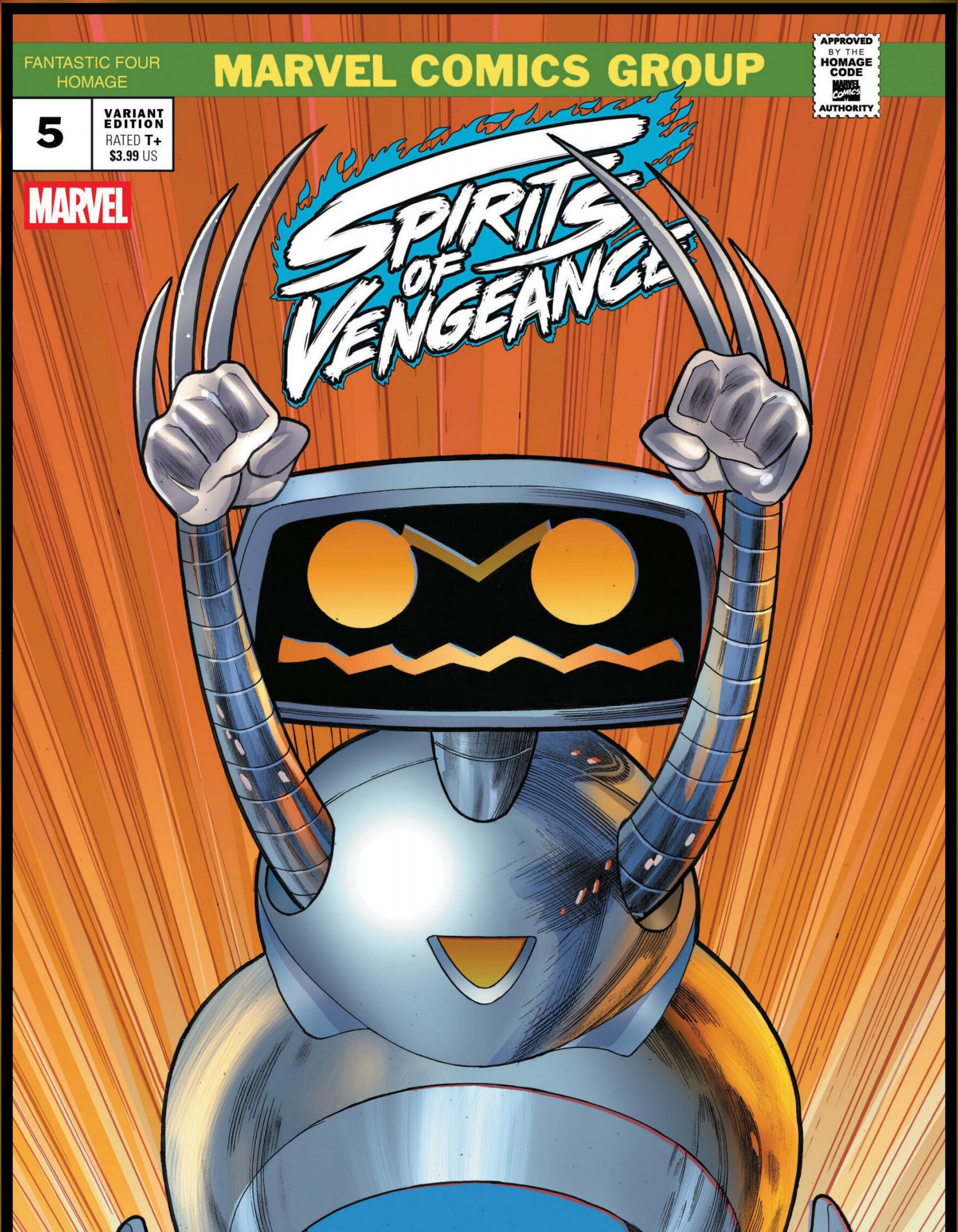
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